



## Research Paper: The Effectiveness of the Life Skills Training on the Personal and Social Happiness of Adolescents



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**Citation:** Pouragha, F. (2023). The Effectiveness of the Life skills training on the Personal and Social Happiness of Adolescents. *Journal of Modern Psychology*, 3(4), 31-39 . <https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2024.444890.1089>

<https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2024.444890.1089>

### Article info:

#### Received date:

16 June 2023

#### Accepted date:

28 Sept. 2023

### Keywords:

Adolescents, Happiness, Life skills training

### Abstract

Increasing the happiness of teenagers can provide a proper upbringing for the future generation of the country, and one of the ways to achieve this goal is to teach them life skills. This research was conducted with the aim of the effectiveness of the life skills training on the personal and social happiness of adolescents. This research is a quasi-experimental type with a pre-test-post-test design and a control group. 40 students from the second secondary level of Zanzan city were selected by convenience sampling method and were randomly divided into two experimental (n = 20) and control groups (n = 20), and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) and the Social Happiness Questionnaire (SHQ) were administered to them as a pre-test and post-test. The life skills training course were conducted for eight sessions (180 minutes each session) on the experimental group, but no intervention was done on the control group during this period. Data were analyzed using covariance analysis and SPSS-23 software. The finding showed that the life skills training course has led to an increase in the personal and social happiness of adolescents ( $P < 0.001$ ). According to these findings, it can be concluded that life skills training as one of the important trainings can be effective in increasing the happiness of teenagers and determine the dynamics of the future generation of the country.

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescents as future builders of society need serious attention. On the one hand, they are in an age period where they experience important physical and mental changes. Maturity and the resulting changes lead to important changes in the adolescent's body and thoughts (Zuhri, 2023). While their body image is affected by maturity (Voelker et al., 2015), they also experience certain emotional and intellectual changes (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). A large percentage of adolescents experience aggression and awakening of sexual desires due to the secretion of sex hormones (Arain, 2013). Therefore, they are one of the groups that experience high rates of depression (Shorey et al., 2022) and anger (Kerr & Schneider, 2008). On the other hand, adolescents in this period follow cognitive changes such as criticism (Gilbert & Irons, 2009) and search for a stable identity (De Lise et al., 2023), which increases the amount of their intellectual concerns compared to before.

Therefore, in order for adolescents to become a dynamic generation in society in the future, it is necessary to increase their individual and social happiness. Happiness as a positive emotion refers to a person's inner positive feeling (Li et al., 2022), which can lead to increased life satisfaction (Handa et al., 2023), hope (Torales et al., 2023) and optimism (Blasco-Belled et al., 2022). Research shows that happy adolescents perform better in school (Kennes et al., 2023) and family (Guo et al., 2023) and their life satisfaction is higher (Büyükçolpan & Ozdemir, 2023).

One of the most important methods that can be used to answer the intellectual concerns of adolescents and increase their happiness is to teach them life skills (Baghaei-Moghadam, 2012; Mohamed & Shehata, 2023; Talebi Amrei & Farahani, 2016). Life skills are a set of skills that help people to act correctly in dealing with different life challenges. Life skills include different types of skills, some of the most important and common ones are: self-knowledge and self-awareness skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, stress and emotion management skills, assertiveness skills, goal setting skills, critical and creative thinking skills and interpersonal and social skills (Camiré, 2023). In fact, the training of life skills is done with the aim that a person can perform better in his daily life by learning them. Research findings have also pointed to the positive effects of life skills training and have shown that it can improve quality of life (Javadi et al., 2013), life satisfaction (Wheeler et al., 2007), reduce stress (Yankey & Biswas, 2012), anger management (Poursalman & Farid 2020), increase resilience (Jenaabadi et al., 2015), hope (Safaralizadeh et al., 2022), optimism (Tabassum et al., 2020), psychological well-being (Sodani et al., 2019) and happiness (Baghaei-Moghadam, 2012; Mohamed & Shehata, 2023; Sadati et al., 2018; Talebi Amrei & Farahani, 2016).

According to the stated contents, this research also intends to examine the effectiveness of life skills training on the personal and social happiness of adolescents.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Statistical Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

This research is a semi-experimental type with a pre-test-post-test design and a control group. The research population was the students of the second secondary level of Zanjan city in the academic year 2021-2022 that forty of them were selected by convenience sampling method and were randomly divided into two experimental ( $n = 20$ ) and control ( $n = 20$ ) groups. Written consent was obtained from the students and their parents to participate in the research, and the students did not have any medical or psychiatric records. All students in the experimental group participated in eight training sessions. Data were analyzed using covariance analysis and SPSS-23 software.

### 2.2. Instrument

**Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ):** This questionnaire was developed by [Argyle et al. \(1989\)](#). OHQ has 29 items and is scored on a 4-point Likert scale from A (0) to D (3). A higher score indicates greater happiness. The validity structure of this scale was confirmed in [Argyle et al. \(1989\)](#) and its internal consistency was 0.90. [Mirzaee et al. \(2021\)](#) investigated the validity and reliability of this scale in Iran. The results showed that the Persian version of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire has a 4-factor structure (life satisfaction, well-being, sociability, control and self-efficacy). Together, these four factors explained 41% of the variance of happiness. The surface validity of the test was also confirmed. The convergent validity results showed that all the sub-components and the total score of the

OHQ, the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire and the NEO Personality Inventory had positive and significant correlations. Divergent validity was also confirmed through a significant negative correlation between the OHQ and the Neo Personality Inventory (neuroticism subscale). The reliability results of the questionnaire with the test-retest method during two weeks (0.79-0.82) and the internal consistency with the Cronbach's alpha method (0.84) showed the reliability and good internal consistency of this tool.

**Social Happiness Questionnaire (SHQ):** This questionnaire was created by [Tamizifar & Azizimehr \(2017\)](#) and has 12 items and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale from very low (1) to very high (5). A better score indicates greater social happiness. In the research of [Tamizifar & Azizimehr \(2017\)](#) using the opinions of several professors and experts, the surface validity of this scale was confirmed and its reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.90.

**Life skills training:** This course included the eight skills of self-awareness, stress management, assertiveness, decision-making and problem-solving, goal setting, critical thinking, creative thinking, and communication skills, which were conducted weekly and in groups during 8 sessions (180 minutes each session). In all sessions were done role playing and presentation of home works. Previously, this course has been used with slight differences in other studies ([Botvin & Griffin, 2004](#); [Mahmoodi et al., 2013](#); [Poursalman & Farid, 2020](#)). Table 1 shows the sessions and the content of each session.

Table 1

*Life skills training sessions*

Sessions	Content of each session
First session	self-awareness (awareness of physical and mental dimensions)
Second session	stress management (learning short-term and long-term stress management techniques such as relaxation)
Third session	Assertiveness (learning the skill of saying no and unhealthy forms of expressing anger)
Fourth session	decision-making and problem-solving (learning problem solving steps)
Fifth session	goal setting (evaluation of goals according to obstacles and limitations)
Sixth session	critical thinking (getting to know the definition of critical thinking and its components)
Seventh session	creative thinking (getting to know the components of creative thinking)
Eighth session	communication skills (familiarity with the principles of interpersonal communication)

**3. Results**

All students were boys. In the experimental group, there were 4 students in the 10th grade, 11 students in the 11th grade, and 4 students in the 12th grade. In the control group, there were 7 students in the 10th grade, 8 students in the 12th grade, and 5

students in the 12th grade. The mean and standard deviation of the age of the experimental group is 16.87 and 1.09, and the mean age of the control group is 17.38 and 1.22. The mean and standard deviation of the personal and social happiness are presented in [Table 2](#) for the two experimental and control groups.

Table 2

*The mean and standard deviation of the personal and social happiness for the two experimental and control groups*

		Personal happiness	Social happiness
Experimental group	Pre-test	24.81±2.47	21.55±2.15
	Post-test	55.71±1.73	42.01±2.43
Control group	Pre-test	22.10±1.44	18.47±2.84
	Post-test	21.98±1.38	17.62±1.52

As can be seen in [Table 2](#), the mean of personal and social happiness increased in the experimental group in post-test, but decreased in the control group. The non-significance of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

in individual (pre-test:  $F = 0.23$ ,  $P = 1.12$ ; post-test:  $F = 0.18$ ,  $P = 1.33$ ) and social (pre-test:  $F = 0.42$ ,  $P = 0.76$ ; post-test:  $F = 0.54$ ,  $P = 0.67$ ) happiness variables shows that the data distribution is normal. The results of the

Levene's test for homogeneity of variances are presented in [Table 3](#).

*Table 3*

*The results of Levene's test to check the homogeneity of variances*

Variables	F	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	p
Personal happiness	1.48	1	38	0.17
Social happiness	1.07	1	38	0.26

The non-significance of Levene's test shows that the assumption of homogeneity of

variances is valid. The results of covariance analysis are presented in [Table 4](#).

*Table 4*

*Results of covariance analysis of life skills training on the personal and social happiness*

variable	Source of changes	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	P
Personal happiness	Pre-test	824.66	1	824.66	25.02	0.001
	group	162.53	1	162.53	14.70	0.001
	error	80.98	38	80.98		
	total	1068.17	40			
Social happiness	Pre-test	619.42	1	619.42	22.48	0.001
	group	301.76	1	301.76	13.69	0.001
	error	135.90	38	135.90		
	total	1057.08	40			

As can be seen in [Table 4](#), life skills training has been able to significantly affect individual and social happiness in the experimental group ( $P < 0.001$ ). According to [Table 3](#), it can be said that the life skills training course has been able to significantly increase the individual and social happiness of the experimental group compared to the control group.

#### 4. Discussion

This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of the life skills training course on the personal and

social happiness of adolescents. The findings showed that the life skills training course led to an increase in the happiness of the experimental group compared to the control group. This finding is consistent with previous researches ([Baghaei-Moghadam, 2012](#); [Mohamed & Shehata, 2023](#); [Sadati et al., 2018](#); [Talebi Amrei & Farahani, 2016](#)).

In the explanation of the obtained findings, it can be said that the life skills training course consists of different and varied skills, mastering each of them can provide the basis for a better and easier life ([Javadi et al., 2013](#); [Wheeler et al., 2007](#)). As

a result, when a person's overall quality of life improves, he will experience more happiness both personally and socially. On the other hand, the ability to manage stress, negative emotions such as anger, and learning relaxation techniques helps a person to maintain positive emotions such as happiness (Bostani et al., 2020). In this training course, adolescents learned how to show appropriate reactions in different areas, both through training and through group discussion and role playing. They learned to recognize most of their appearance, identify their goals, know problem solving methods, learned the right ways of thinking such as critical thinking and creative thinking, learned how to communicate with others and found out how to manage their stress and anger. All these skills will help the adolescent become more emotionally efficient and effective and his self-esteem will increase. As a result, give him a pleasant feeling of this efficiency. It has already been shown that life skills training causes people to increase their self-efficacy (Rezayat & Nayeri, 2013) and experience higher self-esteem (Kazemi et al., 2014).

Although this research was associated with useful results, there were also limitations in it. The people participating in the research were all male students, and therefore, examining female students can help to provide more complete findings in this field. The sampling method was convenience, and therefore all members of the society did not have the same chance to enter the research sample. Finally, considering the usefulness of the life skills training course in increasing the happiness of

students, it is suggested that different organizations, especially education, pay special attention to the life skills training course in schools.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings showed that teaching life skills can lead to an increase in happiness in adolescents. Considering the importance of adolescence and the fact that adolescents are the future builders of society, it is suggested to pay special attention to the discussion of life skills education in schools.

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Zanjam education and all the students who participated in this research

## Conflicts of Interest

The researcher of this study do not has any conflict of interest with each other

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