

The effect of a group based skill–training on self-injury behavior of children in Ahvaz correction center

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Abstract. Self injury among delinquents is a relatively common problem which can be ascribed to psychological causes such as rejection by family and lack of life skills to solve daily life problems logically. This study aimed to determine the effects of skill training to prevent of self injury by the children. The applied research design was a quasi experimental comparing two situations, skill-training and lack of the treatment. The sampling method was a cross-section time which was done in a definite time (six months). During the period, all arrivals are exposed to the treatment; totally, 315 children participated in the program which was counted as experimental group. However, 342 children are included in the control group during the next half of the year. The indexes of socio-economic status, age, imprisonment durance and types of crime among the delinquents during the period were compared to determine the homogeneity of variances in the variables. In addition a self construct test, self injury tendency with four subscales of self-punishment, help-seeking, self-direct anger and power expression was used; its validity and reliability were at least very good. Intervention, a group based method with 12-15 people, consisted of four sessions each lasting for two hours. During the training, life skills were described to the groups in order to be substituted with the deviant ways of self expression, self-injury. The data collected were analyzed with paired-matched t-test and descriptive indexes such as mean, percentage and frequency.

Keywords: skill–training, self-injury, Ahvaz Correction Center

1. Introduction

Imprisonment has several side effects on person, family as well as the society. The prisoners' reaction towards the situation also includes a broad spectrum of behaviors. Some of them react to the experience with depression, isolation and even suicide. On the other side the reactions can appear in form of aggression, bullying and in some cases self-injury. Intentional self-injury is defined as the planned, direct injuring of body tissue or part(s) without suicidal purpose.

The behavior can impose so many costs on the person, family and the society. The costs are not limited to the present and can appear in the future too. From a personal view, the problem can appear in malformation or organ cutting which makes the person's appearance ugly and undesirable. The situation can affect on his social life such as recruitment, marriage and normal interaction in the society. At the same time, the person should pay for hospital, transportation, physiotherapy and in severe cases for plastic surgery. At family level with respect to the age (correction center is especial for fewer than 18 children) and lack of income, self-injury can lead to reduction in family investment and impose costs on it. From a societal perspective, costs can be seen in devastating medical and health facilities, insurance and human sources and even more important, presenting inappropriate model of behavior or deal the problems to others. In brief, self- injury can take a pathological form and makes serious harms for mental health in the society as well as appropriate social consequences [1].

2. Literature

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Merthson[2] extended the anomia construct which had been introduced by Durkheim[3] and counted other reasons for it. While, Durkheim focused on very fast changing in the society as the main reason of the Anomia, Merton, however, studied the phenomena in a stable society and insisted on the social agents. According to Merton [2], fiscal aims which are prescribed by culture in a society distributed equally; however, the necessary instruments to achieve the purposes between different classes and groups are shared disproportionately. Hence, from his view, anomia is a gap between the society members, on the ways to achieve the aims. The achieving instruments to the prescribed purposes in the society are determined by social structure and refer to people's position in the structure. More specific the structural position for people appears in their social class. In some societies there is an unequal distribution in terms of facilities that the society insists a lot to achieve the cultural purposes; at the same time, when the accepted norms of the society are not congruent with social realities, some people may commit deviant behaviours to achieve their purposes. Merton [2] suggests some reactions as: conformity, innovation, retreatism, ritualism and rebellion. These reactions are defined with respect to the purposes as well as how they can be achieved. In Merton's theory conformity is the achieving to social goals by the prescribed and accepted ways; however, innovation indicates of achieving to purposes in unaccepted means. According to the theory innovation includes finding and creating especial ways of achieving to the prescribed purposes. In most case, these ways are counted deviant and unaccepted socially. Ritualists accept the prescribed ways, however they ignore the goals. Ritualists are complied with the means of achieving to the purposes, but they ignore the goals. Retreatism includes the rejection of both the ways as well as the objectives. Retreaters try to escape from both the purposes and the ways. Rebellion is a combination of both rejection of social purposes and the ways; the rebellion people try to substitute other objectives and means [4,5].

Self injury has been studied for several years. For example, Linehan et al. [6] found that the problem can be reduced by giving the target group an educational feedback about the negative effect of the behaviour. zanarin et al. [7] tried to control self injury among people with borderline personality disorder. They could control the problem by applying an educational intervention about negative consequences of the behaviour as well as other ways of self expression. Other researchers also introduced the behavior as one of the characteristics of borderline personality which can be controlled by training social skills against physical and mental harms of the behaviour. In several studies, researchers applied treatments such as skill training, positive reinforcement and behavior contract to control self directed aggression and self-injury with applying [8,9,10, and 11].

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling

Statistical community in this study was children who were sent to ACC by the court during 2010. All the children were selected as sample then among the group a stratified sampling method was applied. Accordingly there were two main groups, the experimental and control which had three subgroups of thieving, aggression and addiction in each. All the children during the first half of the year were counted as the experimental and the second half counted as the control. In fact the community and the sample were the same in the study.

3.2. Research design

The applied design in the study was quasi-experimental with the experimental and control groups as well as pre and post tests. There were also three subgroups in the control and experimental groups. Statistics such as frequency, percent age and *t*.test were applied.

3.3. Instrumentation

There were two tests in the study, socio-economic and self injury tendency questionnaires. The first one is a standard test which was applied by [12]; the validity and reliability indexes of the test were 0.87and 0.95 respectively. The second one is a self-construct test and consisted of 40 items which covered four subscales of self-punishment, help-seeking, self-direct anger and power expression. A panel of professions judge about its content validity. The applied method in this regard was lawshe [13]. In order to meet statistical

considerations about the issue of reliability, Cronbach’s alpha and Guttman Split-Half methods were used and result was report in the table. All the achieved were at least very good.

Table 1 Reliability coefficients of self-injury tendency (Guttman and Cronbach)

Sub-scales	Cronbach’s Alpha	Guttman Split-Half Coefficient
self-punishment	0.954	0.967
help-seeking	0.887	0.935
self-direct anger	0.847	0.892
power expression	0.917	0.938
(overall score)	0.911	0.944

3.4. Intervention

Treatment consisted of 8 hours skill training which through it positive ways of self expression, problem solving and how they can interact in prosocial ways in a group-based according to behaviour therapy approaches [3].

4. Findings

The achieved results will present under titles of descriptive and inferential.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Groups

Groups	Age(mean)	literacy	Family population	Judicial records	Imprisonment (days)
Experimental	16.5	5	6.5	2.2	47
thieving	17.2	6	6	2.5	36
aggression	16.4	4	7	3	52
addiction	15.5	3	7	2	28
Control	16.2	5	6	2.5	49
thieving	16.8	5	5	3	49
aggression	15.9	5	6	2	51
addiction	16	4	6.5	1.5	39

4.1. Inferential findings

The first hypothesis which should be tested was homogeneity of the groups in terms of the socio-economic status.

Table3. Matched pairs *t*-test of homogeneity of the groups (socio-economic status)

Paired Differences				<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i> *	
Mean	SD	SEM**	95% CID***				
			Lower	Upper			
3.24290	19.50681	3.36272	-5.8657	3.69845	0.854	656	0.478

*2-tailed **Standard Error Mean *** Confidence Interval of the Difference

According to table 3 there is not significant difference between the groups, experimental and control, in terms of socio-economic status. Thus the groups can be counted homogenous in this regard and any difference between them can be ascribed to the effect of the intervention.

Table 4. Matched pairs t-test of self injury between the groups

Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> *
Mean	SD	SEM**	95% CID***				
			Lower	Upper			
5.65351	15.20654	4.36563	-6.8695	2.69542	4.258	656	0.014

*2-tailed **Standard Error Mean *** Confidence Interval of the Difference

According to table 4 a significant difference between the groups can be observed.

Table 5 matched-pairs t-test self injury tendency (sub-groups& sub-scales)

Pairs	Indexes	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i> **
Aggression(C-E*)	Overall	11.56	132	0.012
	self-punishment	10.25	132	0.029
	help-seeking	12.78	132	0.032
	self-direct anger	9.22	132	0.036
	power expression	13.09	132	0.028
Addiction(C-E)	Overall	24.02	249	0.001
	self-punishment	19.41	249	0.001
	help-seeking	32.64	249	0.001
	self-direct anger	23.95	249	0.001
	power expression	21.37	249	0.001
Thieving (C-E)	Overall	29.14	273	0.001
	self-punishment	28.54	273	0.001
	help-seeking	30.12	273	0.001
	self-direct anger	28.32	273	0.001
	power expression	24.65	273	0.001

*Control(C)- Experimental(E) **2-tailed

With refer to table 5 it can be seen there are significant differences between the groups in all subscales as well as overall score of the questionnaire. The fact can be observed for all subgroups and also for the subscales and overall score. The findings indicate that the applied intervention was effective and with respect to the homogeneity of the groups in terms of the SES, it can be said that the treatment is effective to prevent the target group from self injury as a harmful behaviour.

5. Discussion

The findings are in line with a lot of researchers [8, 9, 10, and 11]. As all of the subscales and overall scale changed significantly, the result can be ascribed to early intervention, with refereeing to mean ages of the groups. Thus it can be found that the theory can explain the phenomena and the intervention is effective in this regard. The best way of controlling the problem is training other ways of self expression and also training health ways of solving problems.

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7. References

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