The Effect of Self-Control Program on the Social Skills of Mentally Retarded Students

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of self-control program on the social skills of mentally retarded students. In this study, all students over 13 years old were selected from Kosar special school, Shahindej city, Iran (West Azarbaijan province). After executing social skills questionnaire of mentally retarded children (Bahrami et al. 2008) in pretest, students were divided into two groups of 13 individuals and experimental group were trained for a month with self-control program. The posttest was administered to both groups and data were analyzed by analysis of covariance. The results showed that social skills of students were significantly different in the pretest and post-test ($P<0.001$). This study showed that self-control programs increase social skills of under studied mental retarded students.

Keywords: Social Skills, Academic Achievement, Student.

INTRODUCTION

In every period of time, there is people in communities that are not normal mentally, mental retardation or other so-called mental growth failure, is not new issue, the day when human began life, the issue of those who were not able to coordinate with the community due to reasons has been raised (Milanifar, 2005). Students with mental retardation have surface thinking and this has caused an immediate response and they are impulsive. The solution to a problem is to require more thinking, individual with mental retardation, likely will feel more powerless to do so. Lack of deep thinking about issues leads to using easiest and most basic way to solve i.e. the aggression and bullying by intellectual disabilities student and cannot resort to think about the consequences of their actions (Halahan & Kaufman, 2008). Disadvantages are often unable to create social relationships and interaction with peers and adults and future social and emotional adjustment is face with difficulties. These children are often isolated and withdrawn and show anti-social, immature and self-expression behavior (Cowen et al., 1973) and children with social skills are more successful in the education than children without these skills (Parker & Asher, 1987). Social skills deficit is problem associated with poor academic performance and relatively strong and often leads to compatibility problems or future mental disorders (Cole & Dodge, 1983; Cowen et al., 1973; Parker & Asher, 1987). In defining social skills, it can be read that social skills are acceptable behavior that enables a person to interact mutually with other people and avoid social rejection (Gresham & Elliott, 1984). A significant number of students, especially students with intellectual disabilities do not act according to their age due to cognitive limitations (in terms of perception, memory and attention) and are having difficulty learning complex concepts. Due to limited capacity in the field of abstract learning, the children in educational programs focus on theoretical content, less succeeded, and encountered with reducing the incentive. Several studies showed that the lack of social skills has a negative impact on educational
performance (Ray & Elliot, 2006) and create problems in relationship of interpersonal and behavioral - emotional domain (Randy & Michelle, 2008), worsen learning difficulties, hinder a child's progress and eventually lead to adverse consequences in education period, will reduce compatibility of students (Eva, 2003) and face students with disabilities in all aspects (Hyatt & Filler, 2007) as well as students who are not able to fulfill the demands of the classroom, produce unpleasant feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, decreasing motivation and behavioral inconsistency (Levine & Barringer, 2008). Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the effect of self-control program on the social skills of mentally retarded students.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research method was quasi-experimental with pretest - posttest design with control group. The population was all mentally retarded male students from Kosar special school, Shahindej city, Iran (West Azarbaijan province). In this study, 26 students (13 years and more) were chosen that achieved low and high scores in Social Skills Questionnaire, and were randomly divided into control and experimental groups. The study was performed after describing in detail to participants the introductory remarks about the gauges and the purpose of the test, how to response to tests. It can be noted that regarding to ethical considerations, they were assured that the information will be used only in the research and be protected from any abuse after obtaining the consent of the people and giving the necessary knowledge. Following questionnaires were used to measure the variables. The experimental group was trained for a month with self-control program. After the intervention sessions, both groups were tested. The following questionnaires were used to measure the variables. Gresham and Elliott (1999) Social Skills Rating Scale: This scale evaluates social behavior in view of several assessments that has a significant impact on student academic performance, acceptance among peers and his relationship with the teacher. This scale measure the frequency of behavior affecting growth social competence and students compliance at home and school and can be used for students screening, classification and education planning of social skills.

Social skills scale includes three specific forms of evaluation by parents, teachers and students. Each of the forms scales can be used alone or in combination. In current study, form teacher is used. Teachers are the most important sources and sufficient information on the behavior of students (Hage, 1983). The questionnaire with 30 questions with three scores was completed by teachers (with options never, sometimes, often) for all the students. The content of this scale involves two main social skills and behavioral problems. In this study only the social skills was used that include behaviors such as cooperation, assertion and restraints. These parts have been provided in the test and social skills scores is achieved through the sum of the scores in test. Subtests of this scale were as follows:

1. Cooperation: This subscale includes behavior such as cooperation with others, follow their instruction and guidance.

2. Assertion: This subscale consists of initiator behaviors, such as obtaining information from others, introduce themselves to others and respond appropriately to the others behavior.

3. Self - Control: This subtest includes behavior that are in hard situations (such ridicule) requires a reasonable behavior from students and also the receptor behavior that seems to be necessary in difficult situations (such as respect and compromise in the dispute turns).

It should be noted that teachers and parents form are designed for three steps: pre-school, elementary and high schools, students' special form contain two forms for classes' third to sixth and seventh to twelfth grade (Gresham & Elliott, 1999). Reliability of the scale for teachers form was from 0.74 to 0.95 (Gresham & Elliott, 1999). Psychometric properties of this scale have been less studied in the non-American cultures (Shahim, 2002), in a study investigated social skills in children with intellectual disabilities using this scale. The rate of reliability of this scale in his study for social skills, Cooperation, Assertion and self-determination was 0.87, 0.76, 0.72 and 0.68, respectively. In this study, the reliability of this scale after two weeks on 10 subjects was 0.81, which was a high reliability.

Program Protocol: this protocol was derived from self-control scale of Kendall and Wilcox (SCRS) at the University of Minnesota and the program was taught for one month (12 sessions) for students in the experimental group. At the last session, a student who has achieved more points, he was encouraged (quoted by Safari Dehkhardani, 2008). Taught Program and skills were as follows:

1. **Tutorial**: the student was taught to his verbal instructions, to do assignments into method and to provide verbal feedback on their performance. In other words, this method teaches students to speak properly with themselves and to measure verbal performance and guide their behavior with access to a set of scales.

2. In the early tenth of 1970, Black Word changed Tutorial in a manner similar to that was described verbal mediation training. In this way, the students were asked to answer questions about themselves and what they are willing to write. Students learn to see these behaviors and the consequences of their behavior and encourage themselves verbal.
3. **Self-monitoring:** Students monitor on the performance of a particular behavior or set of behaviors and record them. In this way, students are taught to record some activity.

4. **Self-strengthening:** In this section, students will be trained to strengthen or reward their appropriate verbal behaviors. Self-strengthening of student as well as teacher strengthens, enhance behaviors that are reinforced.

According to the general comment about this program, skills such as listening to the teacher, participate in group discussions, homework, personal hygiene, do not offend their peers are taught to students and have to strengthen their verbal and in every meeting that was held, the student's behavior were assessed (according to observations in the classroom, courtyard and home). At the end of the program, the students were encouraged that were able to control their behavior to best practices and earned the more points. For statistical analysis, covariance multivariate analysis was used. In all analyzes, the significance level was considered $p < 0.05$.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores in social skills variable. The mean and standard deviation of social skills in pre-test at experimental group was 28.23 and 3.62, respectively. The mean and standard deviation of post-test in social skills in the experimental group was 41.23 and 3.63, respectively. Also, the mean and standard deviation of pre-test in social skills in the control group was 26.61 and 3.01, respectively and the mean and standard deviation of post-test in social skills in the control group was 26.86 and 3.62, respectively.

**Table 1.** Mean and standard deviation of social skills for each group in pre- and post-test in two groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Testing time</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>28.23</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>41.23</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to use the analysis of covariance, hypotheses were investigated. The significance level of $F$ ($p=0.25$, $F=1.38$), homogeneity of regression slopes were approved. Since, the slope of the regression lines was parallel, so it can be concluded that there was a linear relationship between the covariate and dependent variable (Fig. 1).

![Graph showing the relationship between covariate and dependent variable](image)

**Figure 1.** The scatter plot between the covariate and dependent variable (second hypothesis).

According to the data in Table 2, Levene test show the hypothesis about equality of variances, because in all these cases, observed $F$ ratio was not significant.

**Table 2.** Results of Levene's test to assess the equality of variance in the dependent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>Numerator df</th>
<th>Denominator df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results showed normal distribution of the data (p > 0.05). Table 3 shows that all three indices of test criterion statistic were significant about the differences between the groups in terms of variables. Therefore, two groups are different at least in one of the variables. Follow-up test is presented in Table 4.

### Table 3. Covariance analysis test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/index</th>
<th>Criterion statistic</th>
<th>Value statistics</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df hypothesis</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Pillai</td>
<td>0.941</td>
<td>167.413</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilks</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>167.413</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotelling</td>
<td>15.944</td>
<td>167.413</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Covariance analysis results shows that there were significant differences between groups in social skills. This means that interference in the experimental group than the control group can promote the resolution (Table 4).

### Table 4. Track Test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>group effect</td>
<td>1021.873</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1021.873</td>
<td>228.164</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-test effect</td>
<td>216.112</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>216.112</td>
<td>48.253</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error effect</td>
<td>98.531</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.479</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31785.00</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of self-control program on the social skills of mentally retarded students. The results showed that self-control program lead to increase students' social skills among mentally retarded male student. It can be said that self-control program has been effective in enhancing social skills. These findings with research of Frey (2005) showed a positive relationship between lack of social skills and behavior problems. It can be argued to explain this issue that the social behaviors affect all aspects of life of children and adolescents and affect their next compatibility and happiness. The ability of individual to deal with others and do good social behavior defines his popularity among peers and teachers, parents and other adults. The ability of individual to the social skills is directly concerned to individual social growth and quantity and quality of desirable social behaviors that show itself (Mattson & Olandik, 2005). These students need to be taught social skills in an organized manner. These skills should be taught in different positions in natural opportunities to facilitate generalization (Gresham & Elliott, 1999). Also, some evidence suggests that incompetence in social skills needed to establish positive interaction with teachers and peers can lead to learning, social and emotional problems which can have negative effects in later life (Calderell & Merrell, 1997). Due to the impact of this program to use by class educators, in-service courses and classes can be held for teachers and schools.

**Conflict of interest**
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**REFERENCES**


