



A Comparison of Rational-Emotional approach and Strict Discipline Efficiency on Rational, Emotional, and Behavioral Skills among High School Students

Abbas Almasi¹, Hasan Asadzadeh Dahraei^{2*}, Faezeh Jahan³, Ameneh Moazedian³

¹ PhD Student, Department of Psychology, Semnan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Semnan, Iran

² Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Semnan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Semnan, Iran

*Corresponding author:

Hasan Asadzadeh Dahraei,
Department of Psychology, Allameh
Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran
Email: Asadzadeh@atu.ac.ir

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Rational, emotional, and behavioral skills include self-awareness, as well as critical and creative thinking, which assist individuals in acquiring a deeper understanding of their personality, weaknesses, strengths, emotions, values, and identity. The present research aimed to compare the effect of the rational-emotional theory and strict discipline on rational, emotional, and behavioral skills among high school second-grade students.

Materials and Methods: The current study was conducted based on a pre and post-test design on three groups, including one control and two test groups. The statistical population consisted of 90 male second-grade high school students in Tehran during 2019-2020. The G*Power software was used to calculate the sample size. A number of 75 second-grade students were recruited for this study via the convenient sampling method. After that, the participants were assigned to three groups of 25 students. A self-made questionnaire of life skills, similar to Saatchi, Kamkar, and Askarian, was employed for data collection. Fifteen experts in curriculum planning confirmed the internal and external validity of the questionnaire. Moreover, its reliability was confirmed, rendering a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92. The data were analyzed in SPSS software (version 21) using multi-variant analysis of the covariance and Scheffe's Post Hoc test.

Results: Based on the results, the rational-emotional method had a more significant effect on students' rational ($F=11.56, P<0.001$), emotional ($F=20.33, P<0.001$), and behavioral skills ($F=16.67, P<0.001$), compared to the strict discipline.

Conclusions: It can be concluded that life skill training through rational-emotional theory brings about a marked increase in students' rational, behavioral, and emotional skills. Nevertheless, the strict discipline method revealed no significant association between training students on life skills and increased rational, behavioral, and emotional skills.

Keywords: Behavior, Emotions, Rational, Strict discipline, Students

Background

According to experts, fundamental life skills are assigned to three categories: rational, emotional, and behavioral. Moreover, the education system is responsible for teaching students valuable life skills [1]; therefore, it is essential to take these life skills into account from experts' perspectives. They believe that such skills as self-awareness, stress management, decision-making, problem-solving, handling negative emotions, and creative thinking are considered interpersonal skills. On the other hand, empathy, anger management, effective communication, and critical thinking fall into intrapersonal skills. Therefore, rational, emotional, and behavioral skills are among the most important life abilities [2]. Rational skills include self-awareness, as well as critical and creative thinking.

Self-awareness helps individuals acquire deeper knowledge about their personality, demands, objectives, weaknesses, strengths, emotions, values, and identity. Gaining knowledge about emotions is recognized as one of the most important parts of self-analysis [3]. Critical thinking as a rational skill helps individuals find essential evidence for judgment and conclusion; therefore, all trustworthy evidence should be studied without any prejudice or discrimination. As an example, children with this skill would be able to analyze and then reject their friends' irrational suggestions and finally make an emotional-rational decision [4]. The creative thinking skill broadens the ability to create new thoughts, processes, experiences, and objectives. It helps family members find more effective solutions

for their problems; therefore, they could take many steps toward success [5].

The emotional skill is also recognized as an important life skill consisting of empathy, effective communication, and emotion management. It improves the ability to establish good communication, influence, convince, and resist people [6]. Communication is regarded as the mere tool to transfer and receive information; that is to say, we could express our emotions through establishing communication with others. For instance, effective communication clears up serious misunderstandings and plays a key role in managing negative emotions [7]. Empathy is also regarded as a type of life skill that depends on mutual agreement and respect. It occurs when an individual shows unity with others through his/her statements and body language. The main purpose of any communication is the achievement of empathy. Emotion management is known as the ability to handle stress and other emotions to attain life objectives [8]. Some skills, such as mental health maintenance, purposefulness, decision-making, and problem-solving, are regarded as behavioral skills. Physical and mental health maintenance is among the life skills enabling an individual to move toward mental health and strengthen him/herself against physical and mental problems [9].

The learning of different thinking and thought management methods is considered an important life skill. Moreover, the effect of human beings' social behavior on their interpersonal and social relations highlights the need for training in rational, emotional, and behavioral life skills. The present research provided an almost accurate knowledge about some training methods concerned with the skills above. It assessed the effect of both rational-emotional theory and strict discipline on the level of these skills.

Objectives

The current study aimed to compare the efficiency of rational-emotional theory and a strict discipline on the rational, emotional, and behavioral skills of second-grade high school students.

Materials and Methods

The current study was conducted based on a pre and post-test design on three groups, including one control and two test groups. The statistical population consisted of 90 male second-grade high school students in Tehran during 2019-2020. The **G*Power** software was used to calculate the sample size. A number of 75 second-grade students were recruited for this study via the convenient sampling method. After that, the participants were assigned

to three groups of 25 students, considering the effect size (0.40), confidence level (0.95), test power (0.80), and sample attrition (10%). Non-gifted male students in the second-grade high school without any breaking school discipline history were selected as the sample. Some of them were excluded from the study due to their repeated absence from school or the provision of useless information. The test was carried out through arbitrary participation. Firstly, the participants were provided with the aims and procedure of the study and the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Moreover, members of the control group were allowed to receive the same therapies carried out for the test group after the end of the test if they wished. Access to all documents, questionnaires, and personal records was restricted to the researchers. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Before the research commencement, participants had to take a test on life skills; subsequently, they were randomly assigned to three groups. The first and second experimental groups were trained on rational-emotional theory and strict discipline for eight weekly sessions of 1.5 h. A group consultation was also arranged for the third group (control). The three groups took an exam at the end of the research, and the results were compared. Accordingly, the control variables entailed the field of study, gender, and training district. Such variables as the family's economic and cultural status, parent's employment status, and the number of siblings were not excluded (Tables 1 and 2).

A self-made questionnaire on life skills

The research questionnaire was developed based on Picklesimer and Miller life skill questionnaire. It contains ten sub-scales and 80 items which analyze three rational, emotional, and behavioral components. The items are rated on the Likert scale. The questionnaire evaluates such sub-scales as self-analysis, creative thinking, critical thinking, developing effective communication, empathy, stress management, observing mental and physical health, having a purpose in life, decision-making, and problem-solving. The questionnaire's content validity was evaluated by 15 experts in psychology, reporting the content validity ratio of 0.77. Moreover, in the present research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and concurrent validity were obtained at 0.95 and 0.79, respectively. The data were analyzed in SPSS software (version 21) using multi-variant analysis of the covariance and Scheffe's Post Hoc test.

Table 1. Life skill training protocol based on the emotional-rational theory

Session	Training content
one	Introducing the training course; undermining people beliefs about life and determining their feelings toward themselves, others, and the world; recognizing and making a list of discussed rational and irrational thoughts; describing the wisdom and feelings to manage lives
Two	Training skills about being purposeful in life through the use of rational reasons for having a better life; the necessity for acquiring knowledge about personal features, the importance of having a goal in life; changing emotional attitudes towards a life without considering the wisdom
Three	Training skills for establishing effective communication and empathy considering rational and emotional criteria; avoiding one-sidedness to develop communication with others; integrating wisdom and emotion to establish communication and showing empathy with others; having a favorable attitude toward the world and friends; avoiding negative and destructive thoughts.
Four	Training decision-making and problem-solving skill; making a list of scientific steps towards decision-making and problem-solving; training rational methods for decision-making and problem-solving, avoiding emotional behavior for decision-making and problem-solving.
Five	Training students on stress management skill based on the methods of recognizing, handling, and expressing stress; training students on types of emotions and probable consequences of negative emotions through practical methods; explaining desired results of managing stress
Six	Training students on mental health by highlighting the necessity of observing hygienic issues and avoiding behavioral risks; looking after personal and public health
Seven	Training students on creative thinking based on rational and reasonable criteria for recognizing the relationship among variables; encouraging students in innovation; highlighting the importance of creativity in human life; describing the status of creative people
Eight	Training students on critical thinking based on the governance of reasoning and logic in behavior; highlighting the importance of correcting undesired behaviors; increasing the criticism index, boosting student's courage; making a conclusion, and carrying out a pre-test design

Table 2. A protocol of training life skills based on strict discipline

Session	Training content
one	Introducing yourself and talking about your personality; explaining rules of the class, training course, and expectances of students; determining probable punishments for disobeying group rules; placing group rules on a bulletin board in the class
Two	Training students on the self-analysis skill and being purposeful in life based on expressing your personality; writing your biography regularly; asking students to make a list of their life goals; specifying accurate criteria to write their reports; management of training sessions and penalizing lawbreaker students
Three	Training students on effective communication and empathy skill by explaining the responsibility of people; observing social etiquettes; explaining the legal consequence of violating other's rights, stating legal rules in supporting civilians, introducing the reformatory for the correction of young offenders
Four	Training students on decision-making and problem-solving skills through explaining accurate criteria in decision-making; observing their turn to express their opinions; stating consequences of making wrong decisions and punitive behavior of the family and others; explaining the role of rules in failure to solve some problems as well as having punitive reactions towards some behavioral problems
Five	Training students on stress management skill through explaining the consequences of negative emotionality; stating available rules concerned with damaging others; the necessity of observing people rights; explaining the methods of stress management; holding the session
Six	Training students on mental health skill by highlighting the short-term consequences of ignoring health recommendations; introducing diseases resulting from health negligence, arranging and managing training courses
Seven	Training students on creative thinking by referring to the steps of performing a task and taking safety criteria in developing behaviors and objects into consideration; taking punitive action towards deriding others' opinions
Eight	Training students on critical thinking by indicating the rules concerned with criticizing others; facing unseasonable criticism; accepting criticism and taking responsibility; conclusion, and performing a post-test

Results

The mean age scores in three groups of rational-emotional theory, strict discipline, and control were reported as 16.7±3.5, 16.3±3.2, and 16.4±3.7, respectively (Table 3).

The covariance analysis test and Scheffes' Post Hoc were employed to assess the effect of rational-

emotional theory and strict discipline on students' rational, emotional, and behavioral skills. The assumption of the equality of variances for variables was rejected according to values obtained from the M-box test ((30.08), (P>0.55, F=0.69)), as well as values obtained from the Levene's test for behavioral (P>0.55, F=0.69), emotional (P>0.06,

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables in three groups

Variable	Group	Pre-test	Post-test	P
		M (SD)	M (SD)	
Rational skill	Rational-emotional theory	3.3 (0.3)	4.1 (0.3)	0.001
	Strict discipline	3.3 (0.4)	3.5 (0.4)	0.06
	Control	3.3 (0.3)	3.3 (0.3)	0.95
Emotional skill	Rational-emotional theory	3.1 (0.4)	4.1 (0.2)	0.001
	Strict discipline	3.2 (0.4)	3.4 (0.4)	0.32
	Control	3.1 (0.3)	3.2 (0.4)	0.49
Behavioral skill	Rational-emotional theory	3.1 (0.6)	4.1 (0.3)	0.001
	Strict discipline	3.3 (0.5)	3.5 (0.4)	0.14
	Control	3.3 (0.4)	3.2 (0.5)	0.89

Table 4. Comparing rational, behavioral, and emotional skills in three group

Variable	Groups	Mean difference	SD	P	
Rational skill	Rational-emotional theory	Strict discipline	0.51	0.10	0.001
	Rational-emotional theory	Control	0.78	0.10	0.001
	Strict discipline	Control	0.28	0.10	0.06
Emotional skill	Rational-emotional theory	Strict discipline	0.58	0.10	0.001
	Rational-emotional theory	Control	0.77	0.10	0.001
	Strict discipline	Control	0.19	0.10	0.32
Behavioral skill	Rational-emotional theory	Strict discipline	0.51	0.12	0.002
	Rational-emotional theory	Control	0.81	0.12	0.001
	Strict discipline	Control	0.29	0.12	0.14

F=2.51), and behavioral ($P>0.53$, $F=3.74$) skills.

Multivariate Wilks Lambda test was used to investigate differences among the group regarding rational, emotional, and behavioral components, pointing to a significant difference among rational, emotional, and behavioral skills ($P<0.001$).

As illustrated in Table 4, Scheffe's Post Hoc test results suggest that the intervention group reported significantly more rational, emotional, and behavioral skills through the use of rational-emotional theory compared to the other two groups ($P<0.001$). There is no significant difference in the scores of rational, emotional, and behavioral skills among the studied group under strict discipline and control.

Discussion

The current research aimed to compare the effect of the rational-emotional theory and strict discipline on rational, behavioral, and emotional skills among second-grade high school students. Based on the findings, the rational-emotional theory led to an increase in rational skills, such as self-analysis, creative thinking, and critical thinking. The results of the present study are consistent with those reported by Antonio and Crossett. They assessed the effectiveness of the National Curriculum and Training Institute's "Cognitive Life Skills" Program among parolees.

Based on the findings, teaching seven important behavioral habits, including health maintenance, confiding, hearing, supporting, respecting, encouraging, and negotiating with people in the course of consultation sessions, would facilitate communication development. Furthermore, the rational-emotional theory holds people responsible for their actions. Hence, their mental interpretations play a significant role in forming cognitive distortion and their replacement with rational structures. Therefore, an individual gradually learns more proper conduct and expresses much more skills over time. Research findings revealed no significant association between strict discipline and rational skills among students [10].

It means that aggressive behavior, passive conduct or contempt, fear and anxiety, and lying increased following strict discipline. This method is not

desirable for students since although learners accept the class rules, they fail to believe in training to the extent that sometimes they show negative reaction towards the tutor's demands, rather than deliberately accepting given recommendations taught in the course of thinking skill sessions. Findings pointed to a significant positive association between rational-emotional theory and emotional skills among students. As a result, strict discipline will encourage apparent cooperation among students, while it fails to lead to empathy and deep emotions. The same is true for the skill utilized to establish effective communication. Students trained using rational-emotional theory could develop effective communication and show better reactions towards people using acquired rational beliefs and stress management.

Nevertheless, strict discipline leads to poor and superficial communications; therefore, students lack strong emotions. Research findings revealed no significant relationship between strict discipline and behavioral skills among students. Therefore, strict discipline fails to internalize behavioral values; that is, students obey rules only in the presence of supervisors [11,12].

It means that knowledge, thinking, and responsibility acquired from the rational-emotional theory enable the learners to determine their life objectives. Moreover, they would learn problem-solving skills and mental and physical health methods; therefore, students' behavioral and emotional skills obtained by the use of the rational-emotional theory would be more effective than strict discipline. The former's marked effect can be ascribed to the fact that in the rational-emotional theory, the students will understand their fundamental needs and require rational skills to meet them. Furthermore, students accustom themselves to their needs through rational-emotional power and their role in this theory. However, they would also learn skills regarding critical thinking by taking advantage of behavioral components, especially thinking, controlling their action, and responsive thinking. Using a behavioral component, students understand which behaviors to exhibit in specific situations and perceive the

notion of the desired world, leading to improvements in their creative thinking. Therefore, this training would significantly improve students' rational skills.

Conclusions

As evidenced by the obtained results, training students on life skills through a rational-emotional theory can increase students' rational, behavioral, and emotional skills. Nevertheless, the strict discipline method revealed no significant relationship between training students on life skills and increased rational, behavioral, and emotional skills.

Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles were adhered to in the present research. The participants were informed about the aims and procedure of the research. Written informed consent was obtained from the subjects. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their information. Moreover, the subjects could withdraw from the study if desired. They were also informed that they would be provided with the results of the research.

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Authors' contributions

Conceptualization [Abbas Almasi]; Methodology [Hasan Asadzadeh Dahraei]; Investigation [Faezeh Jahan]; Writing – Original Draft [Ameneh Moazedian]; Writing – Review & Editing, Author names [all author]; Funding Acquisition, [all author]; Resources, [all author]; Supervision, [Hasan Asadzadeh Dahraei].

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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