

The Efficacy of Training Coping Style Skills on the Degree of Noshahr Prisoners' Perceived Stress

Ali Akbar Ameri, Shahnam Abolghasemi*

Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

*Corresponding Author Email: Dr_Shahnam_Abolghasemi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the impact of training coping style skills on the degree of inmates' perceived stress in Noshahr prison. This research was a pseudo-experimental study including a pre-test, post-test design and a control group. The statistical population in this research included 154 prisoners in Noshahr prison from which 109 prisoners were selected as the sample of study using Morgan's Table and responded the perceived stress questionnaire. Among them 60 prisoners had a high perceived stress with respect to the cut-off point of the conducted questionnaires. Then 30 detainees among them were selected using the available sampling method, and were randomly divided into two control and test groups (each group including 15 prisoners). In order to collect data, the perceived stress questionnaire (Cohen) was used. The training program of coping style was presented to the test group in 9 sessions for 45 minutes, and the control group did not receive any training. After completing training of the coping style treatment program, both groups underwent the post test. The collected data analyzed through using the statistical index of covariance analysis, the findings showed that training of skills of the coping style has significantly led to reduction of the prisoners' perceived stress in Noshahr prison.

Keywords: Coping Style, Perceived Stress, Prisoners.

INTRODUCTION

Based on the psychological theories coping styles play an important role in reducing individuals' stress (Barbara & Irwin, 2008). Generally, coping styles refer to cognitive and behavioral efforts to prevent, manage and reduce tension (Penley & Tomaka, 2012). Parker et al (1980) distinguish the general process of individuals' coping according to three basic types of coping styles: Issue-based coping style, the excitement-based coping style and avoidance-based coping styles. The issue-based coping style describes methods according to which an individual assesses actions that he/she do in order to reduce or eliminate a tension. Issue-based behaviors include more information search about the issue from a cognitive point of view and giving priority to the steps for solving that issue. On the contrary, the excitement-based coping style describes methods upon which the individual is focused upon himself/herself and all of his efforts are concentrated on reduction of his unpleasant emotions. The excitement-oriented coping reactions includes crying, becoming nervous and upset, embarking on faultfinding behaviors, preoccupation and fantasy. And finally, avoidance-oriented coping style requires cognitive changes and activities that aim to avoid the tension-producing position. Avoidance coping behaviors may appear in the form of turning towards the society and other individuals.

Lazarus and Folkman (2009) believe that the confrontation is a set of cognitive and behavioral struggles to overcome internal and external demands that from an individual's point of view are energy-consuming and beyond the available resources. According to Lazarus, confrontation is a mediating between events of life and mental health.

Stress is a term that is employed in medicine and biology in various forms. Sometimes it means an event or situation that has a detrimental effect on the organism and sometimes it means psychological stress resulting from these events and situations. In a more detailed sense stress denotes to everything that is brings about a disorder in the biological integrity of an organism and creates cognitive conditions that the organism naturally tries to avoid them (Pour Afkari, 2011).

Contemporary researchers have reached an agreement that stress is neither a stimulant nor a response, but it is a particular interchange of stimulus-response in which the person feels threatened. On this basis, stress is defined as any event that has been threatening or has been considered as a health-threatening factor and thus exerts pressure on his/her coping abilities. This threat can affect the physical security of the individual in the entirety of his/her range of security, his self-esteem, reputation or intellectual relaxation.

Based on the reports that have been published, it is revealed that unfortunately the prisoners experience mental health problems more than the normal population, because being a prisoner has had an important psychological effects on them (Birmingham, 2004). In a way that it is considered as a risk factor a variety of bad emotional stresses. Also, the prisoners' population is inappropriately faced with traumata, mental and emotional deficiencies and has slight ability in the face of difficulties (Durcan, 2008). Therefore, in order to provide mental health and reduce psychological injuries and its social consequences among prisoners, it is necessary that psychological problems and issues related to mental health among them should be taken into account. In this regard, the present study was conducted with the aim of determining the degree of effectiveness of training the coping skills on the level of prisoners' perceived stress in Noshahr.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was conducted with an aim to determine the impact of training of the coping style skills on the level of inmates' perceived stress in Noshahr prison. This research was a pseudo-experimental study employing a pre-test, post-test design with a control group. The Statistical population of this research was the inmates in Noshahr prison (154 individuals) among whom 109 prisoners were selected as the sample based on Morgan's Table. Among them 60 inmates had the highest level of perceived stress among whom 30 prisoners were selected through using the convenience sampling method and were divided into two groups of control and test (each group involving 15 prisoners). After that the test group received coping style training program for 9 sessions of 45 minutes and the control group didn't received any training, then after the completion of the training treatment plan of coping style skill, both of the groups were given posttest. The instrument that is used in this study was the questionnaire of perceived stress by Cohen et al (1983). The above-mentioned questionnaire is a tool that is composed of 14 questions and is used for measuring the general perceived stress during the last month. It measures thoughts and feelings about stressful events, controlling, dominating, cope with experienced psychological pressure and tensions, and this scale also reviews risk producing factors in behavioral disorders and shows the process of stressful relations. This questionnaire has had many applications in different countries and therefore it has been translated into various languages and has been used normalized in many countries. In studies that were conducted by Ghorbani et al Cronbach's Alpha coefficients in American population and Iranian sample were calculated 0.86 and 0.81, respectively (Ghorbani et al., 2002).

The method of intervention

The coping strategies training sessions were conducted as follows:

First session: To familiarization and introduce, to explain the objectives and rules of the group, to conceptualize and describe stress, its symptoms and consequences.

Second session: To teach relaxation and stress relieving techniques, providing assignments in this regard for members of group.

Third session: To review the assignments of the last session, acquaint with cognitive concepts, the role of thoughts in creating stress and the relationship between thoughts with feelings and behavior, characteristics of negative automatic thoughts, to introduce cognitive errors, to provide related assignments.

Session Four: To review tasks and solve problems, to train how to deal with negative thoughts.

Fifth session: To train guided self-talk and the role of negative self-talks in creating stress, to give assignment and receive feedback.

Sixth Session: To fix problems and review the assignments of the last meeting, to train how to concentrate thought and techniques distracting attention.

Seventh session: To teach problem solving, to divide problems into small pieces, to acquaint with brainstorming for finding different solutions, to evaluate the available solutions and choose the best ones, to outline the plan and its details through mental rehearsal, to determine assignments in order to complete the six stages of problem solving.

Eighth session: To practice the skills learned during the past training sessions and the necessity of using this skill in dealing with "stress-provoking situations in order to reduce disease symptoms and increase overall well-being, to review assignments of the past sessions and respond to questions raised by the members of the group.

After the end of the training sessions, the post-test was run for both groups.

RESULTS

In order to test the research hypothesis, the means of difference scores in pre-test and post-test for both control and test groups were studied through univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Before the implementation of the univariate analysis of covariance, research assumptions were examined and after the conducted evaluation, because the linear relationship and homogeneity assumptions of variance/covariance matrix and the equality assumption of variances and homogeneity of the slope of the regression line were observed. The researcher can use the univariate analysis of covariance. Variables' statistical characteristics in both test and control groups are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Statistical characteristics of the dependent variable of perceived stress (N=30).

Components	Test group				Control group			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post test	
	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.
Perceived stress	41	1.51	33.40	1.76	41.20	0.94	40.43	1.04

According to the figures in Table 1, it can be seen that there is a difference between the mean of the control group and that of the test group with regard to the dependent variables of perceived stress and quality of life. These differences in both of these variables are for the profit the test group. The results of adjusted mean for the dependent variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the adjusted mean for dependent variables of perceived stress.

Components	Test group		Control group	
	Mean	Std. D.	Mean	Std. D.
Perceived stress	33.52	0.433	40.218	0.433

Table 3. Analysis resulting from univariate analysis of covariance for the variable of perceived stress.

Diffraction source	SS	df	MS	F	Sign.	Effect size	Power of test
Craving	154.290	1	154.290	87.467	0.000	0.771	1.00
	45.863	26	1.764				

As the results of covariance in Table 3 show, there is a significant difference between adjusted means of the two groups regarding the degree of perceived stress.

$$F_{(1,26)} = 87.467; P < 0.01; \text{Partial } \eta^2 = 0.771$$

CONCLUSION

The results of the univariate analysis of covariance show that training coping style skills is effective on the inmates' degree of the perceived stress in Noshahr prison and leads to reduction of perceived stress in them.

In explaining those results, it can be said that coping styles is one of the major topics that is associated with stress. Coping can be understood as a reaction in front of the mental stressors. This reaction is an individual effort for dominance and triumph over the traumatic harmful, threatening or challenging conditions. Coping mechanisms or coping style are direct and active inclinations or leanings which can be used to remove or resolve stressful events. This research indicated that the training of coping styles has played a significant role in reducing the prisoners' perceived stress. Also in justifying these findings it can be said that if prisoners have positive perceptions about stress, they use coping strategies in a positive way, and when they confronted with stress instead of submitting to stresses, they employ coping strategies.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Barbara, S. R., & Irwin, S. G. (2008). [Abnormal psychology]. Najarian, B., Asghari Moghadam, M. A., & Deghani, M. (Translator). Tehran: Roshd Pub.
- Birmingham, L. (2004). Mental disorder and prisons. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 28, 393-397.
- Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *J Health Soc Behav*, Dec.24 (4), 385-96.
- Durcan, G. (2008). *From the inside: Experiences of prison mental health care*, London: Centre for Mental Health.
- Ghorbani, N., Bing, M. N., Watson, P. J., Davison, H. K. & Mack, D. A. (2002). Self-reported emotional intelligence: Construct similarity and functional dissimilarity of higher-order processing in Iran and the United States. *International Journal of Psychology*, 37(5), 297-308.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (2009). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Parker, G., Tupling, H., & Brown, L. B. (1980). A parental bonding instrument. *British journal of medical psychology*, 52, 1-10.
- Penley, J. A., Tomaka, J. (2012). Associations among the big five emotional responses and coping with acute stress. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32(7), 1215-28.
- Pour Afkari, N. (2001). *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychology - Psychiatry*, Tehran: Entesharat Farhang va Moaser (Culture and Contemporary publications).