

Effect of Fordyce Happiness Training on the Emotion Regulation Difficulties in the Adolescents under Support of Social Welfare

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Abstract

The current study is aimed to investigate the effect of Fordyce happiness training on quality of life, emotion regulation difficulties, and irrational beliefs in adolescent girls under the support of Social Welfare of Zahedan. This is a semi-experimental study with two-group design with pre-test and post-test. The considered sample consisted of 24 adolescent girls under the support of Social Welfare of Zahedan who were selected randomly and assigned randomly to experimental and control groups (in each group $N=12$). To collect data, the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz and Roemer) was used. Fordyce happiness training program was only implemented on the experimental group in 8, 90-minute sessions for 8 weeks. For analyzing data, covariance analysis was applied. The results indicated that the Fordyce happiness training had a significant role in reducing the emotion regulation difficulties.

Key words: Fordyce Training, Emotion Regulation Difficulty, Adolescents

Introduction

Adolescence is an intense and very important period of life. During this critical period, life faces a major change. Compatibility with such fundamental changes is associated with an increase in all types of vulnerabilities, social, psychological and biological pressures in life and as a result, it is associated with reduced coping skills. Therefore, problems such as school dropout, unemployment and reluctance to marriage, antisocial behaviors such as participating in crimes and drug dealing as well as being arrested by police may occur. Moreover, the adolescents who live in round the clock care and supportive centers are encountered with stresses and so many problems. In this case, identifying the skills and the effective adaptive strategies to overcome the difficulties can meet to adolescents' emotional needs and also assist their cognitive and mental development. Adolescents play an important role in the future of the country. They

are the future managers of our country, so their physical and mental well-being is directly correlated with public health and the future of our country.

Regulating the emotion is accounted as the process of initiating, maintaining, modifying, or changing the incidence, severity or the persistence of inner feelings and the emotions associated with social- psychological and physical processes to accomplish an individual's objectives (Vimz and Pina, 2010).

In general, regulating and controlling the emotions is one of the basic elements of welfare and successful functioning, playing a key role in coping with the life events causing stress. The successful regulation of emotion is associated with good outcomes including physical health, happiness, appropriate academic and job performance, improvement of social relationships and interpersonal performance (Gross, 1999; Brackett and Salovey, 2004; John and Gross, 2004).

Conversely, difficulties in the emotion regulation is associated with mental disorders to the extent that inappropriate regulation of emotions plays a role in the different patterns of specific psychological pathology such as borderline personality disorder (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema and Schweizer 2010; Lynch et al, 2007; Gamefski, N et al, 2002), major depression disorder (Rottenberg, Gross and Gotlib, 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema et al, 2008), bipolar disorder (Johnson, 2005) , anxiety disorders (Gross, 2007; Sandler, Tein, West, 1994), social anxiety disorder (Kashdan and Breen, 2008), eating disorder (Bydlowski et al, 2005; Polivy and Herman, 2002; Clyne and Blampied, 2004), alcohol-related disorders (Sher and Grekin, 2007) and disorders related with substance abuse (Fox et al., 2007) as well as physical problems such as heart, vascular and gastric diseases (Begley, 1994).

Hence, one's ability to control emotions is one of the key capabilities that must be learned. Emotional problems and their impact on the individual's overall performance (individual, family, work, and social) have attracted some researchers' attention. Moreover, previous studies indicated that emotional problems involved a high percentage of population in different societies (Salehi, Baghban, Bahrami, and Ahmadi, 2011).

The first approaches were accepted based on bio-neurology in which the scientists argued that different emotions are produced by the nervous system exclusive messages, i.e., the lateral system. However, this idea was revised based on the cotemporary approaches and emotion is no longer defined as a single functional domain that is clearly distinct from cognition (Tettamanti et al, 2012).

Many other psychological studies reported that the emotional process has an interaction with other aspects of cognition such that emotional stimulus affect a wide range of cognitive processes and also influence humans' ability to use cognitive mechanisms in regulating their emotive responses (Ray and Zald, 2012). Therefore, to determine the effect of emotion regulation on the cognitive variables such as memory, concentration, problem solving and thoughts, various studies have been conducted (Rezven and Bahrami, 2006). The general concept of cognitive regulation of emotions indicates the cognitive method of information manipulation related to that emotion (Thompson, 1994).

Most children apply simple and basic methods to overcome environmental challenges. But, as they grow up, they develop their confronting methods and their simple external strategies change into cognitive and internal methods. This is why early adolescence is considered as one of the most important periods for the development of cognitive coping skills; since in this period, their cognitive confronting skills change considerably (Aldwin, 1994).

Therefore, thoughts and recognitions of the ability of managing, regulating and controlling the feelings and emotions, after experiencing a stressful events, play a significant role (Gamefski et al, 2001).

Considering the significance of adolescence and problems that are resulted from the difficulty in regulating the emotions, using Fordyce Happiness Intervention method based on the behavioral-cognitive method in order to restructure the positive thought and cognition is important in decreasing the difficulty in regulating the emotions.

Lybomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005) considered happiness as experiencing the good feeling, satisfaction, contentment and having the feeling that your life is good, meaningful and valuable. Based on this definition, it is clear that happiness is a mental and internal phenomenon.

Happiness has emotional, social and cognitive elements. The emotional elements help an individual to be happy and satisfied. The social elements develop the social relations with others and also increase one's social support. The cognitive elements aid an individual to access an especial thought and information processing and interpret the daily events such that it leads to his/her optimistic approach (Myers and Diener, 1995).

Fordyce (1977), through presenting his plan for increasing happiness, achieved impressive results in creating happiness and increasing mental health. Moreover, the results reported by Lytchr et al. (1980) and Fava et al. (1998), demonstrating that Fordyce happiness training had an impact on increasing happiness and life satisfaction, indicated the effectiveness of this method on increasing happiness. Fordyce happiness training program causes changes in individual's cognitive and emotional structure and help them have a more positive attitude toward current events of life, aiding them to respond more positively and adaptively to circumstances and events. It also helps them to have less stress and a stronger immune system.

To investigate the effectiveness of this training on increasing happiness, various studies conducted in different societies including Bakhtiar Nasr Abadi (2012), Abedi and Mirzaei (2006) and Abedi (2001) whom indicated that Fordyce training is effective on increasing happiness. In addition, the study of Kashani Nasab and Allhverdiani (2012), Frzadfar, Molavi and Atashpour (2006) and Mansour (2005) showed that Fordyce happiness training model reduces the symptoms of depression. Among researchers that were carried out to examine the effectiveness of Fordyce happiness training on other mental and physical elements, indicating the effectiveness of Fordyce cognitive-behavioral method, Raeesi (2003) under the title of "Blood Pressure Reduction", Hosseinian, Kolaei, Yahya Abadi (2007) under the title of "Reducing Occupational Burnout", Mirzaee Tashniri, Pourshahriari, Sheibani (2009) under the title of "Reducing Depression in High School Students", Farzadfar, Molavi, Atashpour (2006) titled "Decreasing Depression in Unaccompanied Women", Kajibaf, Aghaee, Mahmoudi (2011), under the title of "Improving Couples' Quality of Life", Samadzade, Shahbazzadegan, Abbasi (2013) titled "Improving Quality of Life of Dialysis Patients and Patients with Cancer" can be mentioned.

Method

The present study is a semi-experimental study with intervention (control group and experimental group with pre-test and post-test). Sampling: A corpus of 24 adolescent girls under the support of Social Welfare of Zahedan (2013)¹ were selected randomly, using a simple random sampling method and were divided into two groups including experimental (N = 12) and control (N = 12). Intervention program was only carried out on the experimental group.

Research tools:

A 36-item scale of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS) designed by Gratz and Roemer (2004) was created. This sub-scale indicates the level of difficulty in emotion regulation using a combination of scores in six subscales:

- (1): Lack of acceptance of emotional responses,

¹ With emphasis Welfare organization (due to confidentiality), Statistical Society is not possible to give exact statistics.

- (2): Difficulty in handling the targeted behavior,
- (3): Difficulties in impulse control,
- (4): Lack of emotional awareness,
- (5): Limited access to strategies of emotion regulation,
- (6): Lack of emotional clarity.

Gratz and Roemer (2004) reported the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, based on Cronbach's alpha, about 0.93 to 0.80. In studies carried out by Asgari, Pasha, Aminian (2009) and Heydari and Iqbal (2011), its reliability was calculated in accordance with Cronbach's alpha and split-half method which was about 0.86, 0.80, and 0.91, 0.85, representing acceptable coefficients of Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. Also, in another study conducted by Azizi (2010), Cronbach's alpha of this scale was about 0.92. The experimental group received 8, 90-minute sessions training during 8 weekly sessions.

At the end of training sessions, both groups completed the questionnaires again. In order to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, along with the descriptive indices such as mean and standard variance, the analysis of covariance was used. To facilitate the calculations, SPSS (21) statistical software was applied.

Fordyce Happiness Training Program

Fordyce (1977), in his instructional practices, used an approach of training that is both cognitive and behavioral. In the cognitive part, he studied the thematic discussions about certain thoughts and behaviors which are involved in creating happiness. However, in the behavioral part, he considered the various collection of techniques and strategies resulted from the cognitive and behavioral therapies which he believed that their application can be useful for each principles of life. Fourteen cognitive and behavioral elements of Fordyce program (6 behavioral elements and 8 cognitive ones) for increasing happiness are as follows:

- Increasing activity,
- Increasing social interaction,
- Increasing creativity,
- Planning and organizing,
- Decreasing concerns,
- Reducing expectations,
- Increasing the positive thinking and optimism ,
- Living in the present,
- Fostering a healthy personality,
- Fostering a social personality,
- Considering yourself,
- Eliminating the negative emotions,
- Fostering the close relationships and
- Prioritizing the happiness.

Results

Some of the descriptive indicators related to difficulties in emotion regulation based on the results of research tools on the considered sample were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Indices Related to the Total Score of Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (In the Stages of Pre- and Post-Test for experimental group and control group separately)

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD
Pre-test	Control	12	91.57	14.57
	Experimental	12	91.25	18.66
Post-test	Control	12	88.41	13.23
	Experimental	12	65.75	16.64

Table 1 represents the descriptive indicators of variables. The results of this table demonstrate that in the experimental group, the mean and standard deviation in the pre-test and post-test are $M = 91.25$, $SD = 18.86$ and $M = 65.75$, $SD = 16.64$, respectively. It is clear that in the mean of pre- test and post- test scores, a significant difference was observed. Also, in the control group in the stage of pre-test and post-test, the mean and standard deviation are $M = 91.75$, $SD = 14.57$ and $SD = 13.23$, $M = 88.41$, respectively which indicates a slight difference between the mean of scores.

Hypothesis

The effect of Fordyce happiness training decreases the difficulties in emotion regulation in adolescents under the support of Social Welfare. In order to test this hypothesis, the covariance analysis was used and its results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance Related to the Effect of Fordyce Happiness Training on the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation in the Studied Groups

Source	Fd	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared	Observed Power
Pre-test	1	181.80	0.79	0.38	0.03	0.13
Group	1	3058.61	13.40	0.001	0.39	0.93

As it is evident from Table 2, Fordyce happiness training has a significant positive effect on decreasing the difficulties in emotion regulation; $F(13, 40) = 1$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

Emotion regulation is a significant factor in initiating, evaluating and organizing adaptive behaviors and is also considered as an avoiding element in incidence of negative emotions and maladaptive behaviors (Garnefski et al., 2002). The present study aimed to investigate the impact of Fordyce happiness training on reducing the difficulties of emotion regulation. The results of covariance analysis (Table 2) showed that Fordyce happiness training was effective on reducing the difficulties of emotion regulation ($F(13, 40) = 1$, $p < .01$). This finding is consistent with the study of Yousefi et al. (2010) regarding the effect of training on the mental health and emotional intelligence. Also, the results are in line with Lytchr et al. (1980) and Fava et al. (1998) studies, indicating the effect of Fordyce happiness training on increasing happiness and life satisfaction. Raeesi (2003) under the title of "Blood Pressure Reduction", Hosseinian, Kolaei, Yahya Abadi (2007) under the title of "Reducing Occupational Burnout", Mirzaee Tashniri, Pourshahriari, Sheibani (2009) under the title of

"Reducing Depression in High School Students", Farzadfar, Molavi, Atashpour (2006) titled "Decreasing Depression in Unaccompanied Women", Kajibaf, Aghaee, Mahmoudi (2011), under the title of "Improving Couples' Quality of Life", Samadzade, Shahbazzadegan, Abbasi (2013) are other studies that demonstrated the effectiveness of Fordyce happiness training on other physical and mental elements, indicating the effectiveness of Fordyce cognitive-behavioral training.

In recent years, great attention has been allocated to the happiness. In addition to the definition of happiness and methods to achieve it, various instruments were designed to measure the level of happiness of people around the world. Moreover, the researchers attempt to increase people's happiness. To this end, different training methods were designed and implemented for increasing happiness. One of the training methods that attracted Iranian many researchers in recent years is Fordyce Happiness Training Method. So, based on different studies, the effectiveness of this method on increasing happiness was proved. Other studies determined the effectiveness of this behavioral-cognitive method on other psychological factors.

Fordyce cognitive-behavioral training is a kind of rehabilitation cognitive which has materials in training that enhance the cognitive functions. What is certain is that all methods of Fordyce happiness including reducing the level of expectations and desires, removing the concerns, reinforcing the positive and optimistic thinking, living in the present time, prioritizing the happiness, removing the negative feelings and problems, fostering the social and extroverted personality are counterpart with difficulties in regulation of emotions and when an individual considers them, his/her physical and psychological health will improve.

In facing with stressful situations, people use different methods and strategies to control, direct, and regulate their emotions. Emotion regulation is defined as attempts applied by an individual to protect, manage, and enhance his/her emotion experience and expression (Robertin, Dofn, Box, 2012)

Although emotions have a biological basis, individuals are able to express their emotions and control them. In general, emotion regulation is one the main factors of welfare and successful functionality and has an important role in coping with the stressful events of life. The successful emotion regulation is associated with good results such as being health, appropriate academic and job performance. On the contrary, the failure in emotion regulation is associated with mental and personality disorders and anxiety disorders (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema and Schweizer, 2010; Gratz and Roemer Lynch, 2004; Garnefski et al, 2002).

Need to be approved by others, unwillingness to work with others and feel embarrassed among the peers or in other words, low social performance and fatigue status during the training sessions were observed frequently among the sample. Considering the deprivations of adolescents under support of social welfare, an intervention in order to improve their psychological welfare can be really effective.

After holding each training session and teaching each of the components of the training, participants showed greater abilities in the following cases;

- Discuss and negotiate,
- Prepare themselves to continue their education,
- Express their readiness and ability to participate in the classes of sport, art and the domains of their interest (improving the preparedness for participating in the collective activities),
- The ability for accomplishing the long-term and short-term plans in order to achieve the goals,
- Express the feeling of vitality and transfer the feeling of happiness to others,
- Recommend suggestions and transfer their learning(s) or what they have learned during this eight sessions to their friends and family,
- The ability to understand the importance of their excitements,
- The ability to identify the effective strategies in order to deal with situations which were difficult for them (for example, expressing concern about being in a group, inability to respond and concerns toward the favorite activities),
- Increase the physical activities, improve the physical situation, and
- Express the optimism to people and environment and what is happening around us.

Since the training was conducted only on the adolescents under the support of Social Welfare, so it is not possible to generalize the results to other age groups under the support of Social Welfare of Zahedan. Few studies have been carried out on the impact of Fordyce happiness training on adolescents. Thus, other researchers can accomplish this study by the cooperation of staffs of Social Welfare, Education, Training Association organizations and other organizations that are associated with adolescents to develop and equip the happiness training workshop for adolescents, performing effective and constructive measures for improving their mental health.

Also, completing this study in other cities and within the various classes of society can be a great help for increasing individuals' happiness and mental health.

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