



# Effectiveness of positive thinking skills Training on Hamedan Students Anxiety and Happiness

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**Abstract:** Students as main founders of science and knowledge production have effective role in the advancement of the country. So, strengthening the happiness and prosperity in the university is very important, so that it brings well – being of students health and the university health. The main hypothesis of this research was that training positive thinking skills reduces anxiety of the students and this increases happiness. present research is of semi – experimental (intervention) researchs with the pre test – post test with the control group. In this research, population is the students of Hamedan office in 93 – 94 academic year. A sample of 30 students were selected in multi – stage random method. before performing educational intervention (introducing independent variable), two groups were pre tested using Cattell Anxiety and Oxford Happiness questionnaire (positive thinking). Then, subjects were randomly assigned in two experimental and control groups. In the next step, the experimental group was taught positive thinking skills for 8 sessions of 2 hours. One week after intervention, each group was post tested two times. Analysis of results using independent t – test showed that difference of the trace between two experimental and control groups is significant. In other words, positive thinking skills training was effective in changing anxiety and happiness. Obtained result in the research are consistent with other researches and confirm efficiency and effectiveness of positive thinking skills training on reducing anxiety and increasing happiness of the girl students.

**Keywords:** positive thinking, anxiety, happiness, optimism.

## Introduction

Happiness and joy is one of the positive emotions in human existence that affects feeling and behavior of human. Happiness is one of parts of life that certainly we cannot found someone who has not experienced it. This is because human mind is continuously affected by its feelings, perceptions and imagery. And following these imagery and positive feelings, a state is created for human other than previous feelings that holds him in the state of happiness. The pursuit of happiness is a very important purpose for the community. For this reason, increasing happiness levels of people can truly be valuable scientific goal [1,2]. Also, a person who is more happiness, is more relax and feels more secure, makes easier decisions, has desirable work and more participation, has more healthy and energetic life and finally has more satisfying life [3]. Van Hood in 2003 also believes that happiness is the positive value that a person maintains for himself. For this reason, Seligman (1998) considers the understanding happiness concept and its appropriate applying as the important optimist psychological cases and considers it as a broad concept that includes low levels of negative emotions and high satisfaction of life in addition to optimal emotions [4].

Stressful events of life along with psychological vulnerabilities such as inadequacy feelings in controlling them have major share in the emergence of psychological disorders including anxiety. All steps that one takes forward, scientific, art and literary discoveries are also done on the basis of anxiety. That is, the ordinary man needs some anxiety to search. But, if the existing anxiety is out of tolerance of a person, to the extent that be overwhelming, it is considered mental disorder that disrupts people's lives [5].

Universities are one of the most important training centers of expert manpower. In these centers, training is encountered with serious challenges without appropriate understanding of problems and issues of the students. Psychological disorders such as anxiety is among the students psychological problems. Certainly, these disorders can have negative effect on the students learning and mak study undesirable at university.

Since students are faced numerous challenges during their studies, these challenges affect their motivation, academic performance and psychological well – being. Results of the research suggest that taking advantage of positive thinking can somewhat reduce psychological disorders [6].

But, according to Peterson (1998), the most important problem in the mental activity is having an optimistic look at themselves and the world which leads to longer life.

Hamchmim shir and karver (1993) believe that individuals who have general optimistic opinion about themselves and also about the world have better physical health. In other words, it can be said that positive people are healthier and happier and their immunity systems work better. They cope better with stresses enjoying more effective coping strategies such as re – evaluation of problem – solving.

Because those who see the full half of the glass are healthier than those see the empty half of the glass [7,8]. Fortunately, psychologists have achieved to change cynicism and negativity. Cognitive psychologists have achieved useful methods in the area of changing maladaptive thought habits that many people fall into their trap when failure [9]. A survey conducted about the universities students shows that students with more positive feelings are better decision – makers, have high interpersonal communication skills which these two skills are important features of successful managers [10].

Also, dinner's (2002) research results indicate that happiest students of Aplinus university have effective and strong relations with friends, family and society [11].

Optimism training as the adverse events plan of the past life and their adjustment by determining positive objectives for the future will be effective on the increasing self – effectiveness, meaning and life expectancy and their welfare. Also, they learn to increase happiness, health, and their self – esteem. In addition, they learn to take active position in the world around themselves and to form their own life [12]. Although present day has encountered with rapid and staggering progress in the science, technology and communication and this progress is positive, but led to the obvious gap in the lives of most people. Anxiety, disappointment, distress, stress, pessimism and conflict, statistics of abnormal behaviors and – in a word, the formation of numerous psycho – social problems all are clear examples of this claim [13].

The most important temporary outcomes of these problems are the reducing the levels of happiness, optimism and positive thinking. So, positive thinking approach can be effective and efficient in reducing these psychological pressures and disorders especially anxiety [14].

With these training, they are prepared to deal with difficulties and can carry out a deliberate attempt to overcome their difficulties. And they can find ability to mean events positively instead of despair and frustration and cynical interpretations and face them lively.

Aim of training is optimism and positive thinking skill that students find realistic view of themselves and their lives and judge properly about the real problems [15].

Recently, psychology has investigated new issues and phenomena such as positive psychology. Positive psychology that is the branch of psychology focuses and emphasizes scientific study of the important issues such as happiness, gratification and positive thinking [16].

In recent years, studies are carried out about the effectiveness of the optimism and positive thinking skills training with the aim of preventing student's anxiety. In following, we refer to the results of a few research carried out at home and abroad.

Tested students have followed their physical symptoms during one month. In this study, it became evident that students who had high scores in terms of their self had less symptoms such as fatigue, confusion, muscle tenderness and blurred vision.

Subjects symptoms are studied at the beginning of the study and before performing test and so based on the research findings it became clear that undoubtedly, the optimists are healthier than pessimists [17].

Also, segrestam et al (1998) found that students who have high positive thinking have better mood and are safe in response to stress compared to others. Ostadian et al in a research conducting on Behbahan students have stated positive and significant relationship between positive thinking and mental health of the students.

Bani Adam in his research titled effectiveness of positive thinking skills training on the happiness of students found that positive thinking skills training increases happiness, life satisfaction, positive mood and health. In the research, researcher tries to find scientific answer for this fundamental question whether positive thinking skills training to the students are effective on their anxiety and happiness.

In present research, two hypotheses are tested that include:

\_ Training positive thinking skills reduces student's anxiety.

\_ Training positive thinking skills increases student's happiness.

### **Methodology**

Present research is some – experimental (interventional) research. Research project used in the research is pre test – post test with control group. This project is formed of two subject groups who both groups are measured two times. First measurement is done after intervention by performing a pre test. For forming the groups, researcher has replaced half of the subjects in the first group (30 individuals) and other half in the second group (15 individuals) using multi – stage random sampling. Both groups that are formed in such a way are the same and dependent variable is measured at the same time and under the same conditions for both of them.

### **Population**

Population of the research is all girl students of Hamedan city who have studied in 93 – 94 academic year.

Sampling method and number of sample

In the research, multi – stage random sampling is used. For doing this, 4 universities are randomly selected among all Hamedan universities except for profit universities and in the next stage, 100 students (prototype) were randomly selected among students of these universities.

### **Research conducting process**

Before starting the training program, all subjects (experimental and control) were tested at the same time. In other words, pre test was done under the same condition for both groups. Then positive thinking skills training (independent variable) was performed on the subjects of the experimental group for 8 sessions of two hours in 4 consecutive weeks. Training program applied in the research was prepared of several authoritative scientific sources by research and content of the program was prepared before performing by researcher and content of the program was verified under the supervision of experienced consultants. In addition, training material were performed in the form of workshop and in terms of images, example and story that were prepared by researcher.

And programs such as positive thinking in 21 days include the positive writing wishes and the secret of living happy.

They were introduced at the beginning of each session and subjects had to take note the interesting and important points in addition to listen them and also answered to the questions introduced in the class.

Introduced training program includes three general areas of positive thinking to self, positive thinking to others and positive thinking to the world. Minor issues and titles of the eight session training program included:

- Meaning and concept of optimism and positive thinking skills and explaining session goals.
- Self – awareness and self – knowledge
- Self – acceptance and self – esteem
- Identifying responsibilities and responsible behavior
- Me at the others' look
- Optimism and hope
- Looking positively and recognizing positive features of self in the group and practical discussion way (doing supplementary activities)
- Introducing and identifying irrational thoughts that lead to pessimism and negative looking at themselves, others and the life
- Effect positive and negative self – talk on the negative feeling and behavior
- positive and negative people feature
- optimism and positive thinking limitations
- relationship between thoughts, feelings and behavior (introducing Ellis ABC Model in the form of simple examples)

Training method was that first researcher stated the theme of each session and its aim and introduced the title of session in 15 minutes. Then, skills were introduced in the form of example and then they were paid to do practical activities introduced in class. Then, answers were collected and each subject had introduced his work results. Required feedbacks were given to subjects by researcher and at the end of each session were concluded.

Then, for more training and learning, theme of each session was given them as home works. 10 days after last session of positive thinking skills training (independent variable), both groups were post tested again.

**Research tools**

In order to gather information in the research, subjects were asked to answer to two questionnaires of cattle anxiety and oxford happiness scale.

Cattell Anxiety Questionnaire: This questionnaire has been designed and developed by Cattell, consisting 43 – option statements that 5 factors have measures anxiety symptoms. This test has been selected by Ms. Dadstan in 1369. Total correlation with "Doolesh" anxiety index is estimated 72% and by Purcell, Taylor and correlation rate are estimated 51%, 65% and 43%.

Oxford happiness questionnaire of positive thinking is consisted of 29 basic questions and Alipoor and Noorbala (1379) have reported 92 and 93% for alpha coefficients and reliability and repotted average happiness 45/5 for men and 46 for women. This questionnaire consists of 5 dimensions that are life satisfaction, health, positive mood, effectiveness and self – esteem. Alpha coefficient of this questionnaire is 791%.

**Results**

Generally, results showed that post test was not significant for both groups. But only in experimental group that affected by interventional program, post test scores are changed compared to the pre test. By analyzing results, it was inferred that anxiety and happiness of the experimental group is increased under the effect of the interventional programs (training) of positive thinking skills.

As seen in Table 1, in pre test, there is no difference in average scores between the experimental and control groups at least in the anxiety variable, but in post test, there is significant difference between scores of both groups. The information contained in this table shows that individuals of the control group have obtained less scores (41/26) in the happiness post test compared to the scores of the experimental group (60/10). On the other hand, scores of the experimental group are significantly decreased in the anxiety post test. It means that anxiety score is changed from 55.93 to 26.13, that is, anxiety is decreased. But, scores of control group have remained stable in the post test and are not noticeably changed (40/46 to 40/26). In fact, this indicates that main aim of the research that is reducing of anxiety and increasing happiness is fulfilled. Mentioned result is also seen in the column of total average. Information contained in Table 2 show that average scores of pre test of the experimental and control group has not significant difference in positive thinking, happiness and anxiety variables. It means that experimental and control group in the research have not significant difference in the mentioned variables before doing test interventions and are almost equal. In following, research hypothesis are examined that are tested using correlation coefficient and t – test of independent groups.

Table 1: subjects scores in pre test and post test in the experimental and control groups

Groups Variables	experimental			Control		
	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Anxeity pre test	15	55/3	3/64	15	57/3	13/75
Anxeity post test	15	29/13	9/98	15	56/7	14/25
Happiness pre test	15	43/06	5/10	15	40/46	2/25
Happiness post test	15	60/10	60/10	15	44/24	2/49

The first hypothesis is confirmed that training positive thinking reduces student's anxiety. Second hypothesis test: training positive thinking skills is effective on the student's happiness.

For testing above hypothesis, average scores of subjects in the happiness post test using t – test of independent groups among both experimental and control group in Table 4 again shows that training positive thinking affects subjects of the experimental group.

$$t = -0/2, P < 0/01, Df = 28$$

For a group had to decrease anxiety.

$$t = -1/79, P < 0/01, Df = 28$$

For a group had to increase happiness.

With respect to the results, it can be said that this hypothesis is also confirmed.

As seen in Table 3, t – value obtained from difference scores of pre test ad post test is more than t – value of the table compared to experimental and control groups and  $P < 0/01$ . So, with confidence more than 99%, it can be said that training positive thinking skills could create significant change in anxiety and happiness.

For endorsing the effect of positive thinking skills training on the subjects anxiety, difference test of average scores of pre test and post test of both experimental and control groups is given in Table 4.

As seen in Table 4,

Table 2: Comparison of subject's scores of experimental and control group in pre test of anxiety and happiness variables

Variable	Groups	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	T - value	Freedom degree	Significant level
Anxiety	experimental	????	55/93	3/66	-0/2	28	0/81
	Control	???	57/13	13/75			
Happiness	experimental	????	?????	5/10	1/79	28	0/22
	Control	?????	??????	2/25			

Table 3: Comparison of subject's scores of experimental and control group in post test of anxiety and happiness variables.

Variable	Groups	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	T - value	Freedom degree	Significant level
Anxiety	experimental	????	????	9/18	-6/29	28	0/01
	Control	???	????	14/24			
Happiness	experimental	????	?????	8/88	8/8	28	0/01
	Control	?????	??????	2/19			

Table 4: t – test results on difference scores of pre test and post test of experimental and control groups for a nxiety and happiness

Variable	Groups	pre test mean	ppst test mean	Difference mean	T - value	Freedom degree	Significant level
Anxiety	experimental	55/93	29/3	????	????	29	0/01
	Control	57/13	56/73	????			
Happiness	experimental	43/06	60/80	???	4/96	29	0/01
	Control	40/46	46/46	????			

First hypothesis test: training positive thinking skills affects reduction of student's anxiety.

For testing this hypothesis, t – test of independent groups is analyzed on the mean scores of subjects in anxiety post test among control and experimental groups.

Table 3 shows the results of the analysis. Based on this information, it can be said that post test compared to experimental and control groups has more t – value and  $P < 0/01$ .

So, with confidence more than 99%, it can be said that training positive thinking skills could create significant change in anxiety of students of experimental group.

### Results discussion

This research is carried out with the aim of examining effectiveness of positive thinking skills training on student's anxiety and happiness that its findings are as follow. First hypothesis of present research was that training positive thinking skills has effect on reducing anxiety that analyzed using t – test of independent groups on the average scores of subjects in cat tell anxiety post test among experimental and control groups. This hypothesis was confirmed with significant level of  $P < 0/001$  indicating the effect of positive thinking skills on the anxiety change. For comprising obtained result, there was the same study showing effect of positive thinking training on the anxiety change. Result of the research was consistent with Merkula's (2000) findings that done on many people. The result of the research showed that pessimism is associated with high levels of anger and anxiety. Also,

Second hypothesis was that training positive thinking skills has effect on happiness change. For testing this hypothesis, average scores of subjects was separately done in happiness test using t – test of independent groups among both experimental and control groups. The results of the analysis indicated that training positive thinking skills has effect on student's happiness. Significant level is %1. Also, t – test conducting on the difference scores of pre test and post test of experimental and control groups for positive thinking, happiness and anxiety has confirmed the effectiveness of training positive thinking skills on student's happiness. So, this hypothesis is also confirmed.

In other words, training positive thinking leads to increase happiness, on the other hand, because both experimental and control group has no significant difference before applying independent variable (positive thinking training), so, obtained difference in post test indicates the effect of positive thinking skills training on the students happiness. Generally, results of the research showed that changes created in happiness and

positive thinking of the students have been due to introduce independent variable (positive thinking skills training).

According to the research findings, it can be claimed that positive thinking skills training has been effective on increasing happiness of the students and the method applied in present research can be appropriate method for psychological, educational and counseling and therapy interventions. The results of the research have many applications in clinical psychotherapy counseling, because some clients see their problems apart from themselves, and this belief leads to appear problems or deteriorate them, so findings of the research can be used for preventing anxiety, strengthening happiness and academic achievement of students in the psychology and counseling clinics. This research has limitation in the implementation such that it can be said that research is done on Hamedan students and it is necessary to generalize results to other regions of the country. Also, sample is small and it is better to conduct on more samples to obtain more detailed information from the research. And research was carried out only in female. So it is not applicable for females. Holding training and workshop sessions can be effective in order to promote mental health and to decrease anxiety for university students. It is recommended to the researchers that with respect to the effectiveness of positive training intervention in reducing anxiety and increasing happiness of students, they use other interventional methods such as cognitive – behavioral, logo therapy, rational, emotional, reality therapy in addition to the intervention acts on female students to provide comparison of the intervention types.

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