



Effectiveness of effective communication training on the self-esteem and general health of women visiting the counseling centers of district 1 of Tehran

Marzieh HosseinZadeh Dashty^{1*}, Farideh DokaneiFard¹

¹Department of Counselling, Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran

Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to review the effectiveness of effective communication training on the self-esteem and general health of women visiting the counseling centers of the district 1 of Tehran. This is a semi-experimental with a pretest, posttest and a control group. The statistical population of this study was comprised of women visiting the counseling centers of district 1 of Tehran city. 50 of these women showed interest in participating in effective communication training courses. Out of these 50 women, 30 of them were selected as the research sample using simple random sampling method and were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The general health questionnaire (GHQ28) and Aizeng self-esteem questionnaire were the tools used in this research. The independent variable in this research was the effective communication training and the effective communication training course offered to the samples in the experimental group was 10 2-hour sessions. After the training program ended, the posttest was done for the both groups. The results of the analysis of hypotheses using covariance analysis method showed that effective communication training has affected the general health and self-esteem of women participating in the courses.*

Keywords: *Effective Communication Training, General Health, Self-Esteem*

INTRODUCTION

Communication with others for human beings, who are social creatures, is considered to be significant and natural. Since we live in groups, whether we like it or not, we are constantly communicating with others. All we do seems to be some kind of communication. In order to fulfill our needs, we have to establish relationships with others. However, as we know, communication will only be efficient when it is positive and constructive; otherwise, it will only be turbulent (Cahill, 2014).

As time went by, throughout the history of humans, virtual means of communication enabled human beings to induce their beliefs and ideas to the future generations and those who live far away from them. Currently, we live in a world that in addition to television and radio, computers have triggered a greater revolution in the world of communication (Lovaas, 2003). With the help of satellites and internet, this enormous world has turned into a small village, or even a small family. Human relationship is the foundation of the human society and without, culture would have never become a specification of the human society. On the other hand, development of electronic communication differentiates our modern society from previous ones and that is why the modern age is sometimes called the age of communication (Stokoe, 2014).

Most people experience severely stressful problems associated with communication. In fact, after a family member suddenly dies, after individuals feel marital distress or get a divorce, they go through severe

pressures. Communication skills are particular abilities that everyone needs so that they would be competent when they deliver symbolic messages to others (Bornstein, 1986).

Nowadays, people establish effective, constructive and stable interactions with each other and that is how they go through things. Comparing today's world with the previous ones indicate that interaction between different individuals is currently a very important and a basic factor that plays a key role in improving the lives of human beings and a multi-dimension improvement of the progress made by societies (Maguire, P. and Pitceathly, 2002).

By communicating, we are seeking to create social bonds, to feel peaceful and secure and for this, we need to have some social skills, one of which is effective communication. How to communicate successfully and healthily depends on various factors. In this research, we review the effectiveness of some of these factors. Self-esteem, general health and mentality of a person (Finset et al., 2003). Mental health, with the formation of a high self-esteem and a positive self-concept, is considered to be an important process of human growth. People with a weak self-concept or low self-esteem, show symptoms of emotional disorders and low levels of general health. This would lead to disorders in the social behaviors of a person and would overshadow individual communications (Rafiee, 2009).

Members of a social group or a family know each other's needs better than anyone and know how to fulfill them; as a result, they become happier with life and with each other and go through different issues together. That is how general health becomes possible for individuals, a friendly space filled with love is created, individuals show creativity, families become more stable and it becomes easier for the individuals to manage affairs. In such cases, productivity and profitability economically improves. Through effective communication, human needs would be fulfilled and human beings would become physically and mentally secure, human beings would be accurately known, developed and their self-prosperity would peak (they would have higher self-esteem) (Amir Hosseini, 2010).

Self-esteem affects the interaction between individuals and is also affected by them. When one thinks that he/she is accepted by others, that person would have high self-esteem and would think that he/she is competent and is able to take risks regarding creativity and to do things fearlessly. And then, because of this creativity and because of the positive reaction they show to others, the level of their self-esteem becomes higher and they become more assured (Baumeister, 2013).

Among personality traits, satisfaction with life, self-esteem and sociability have positive relationships with happiness and general health and distress, loneliness, shyness, depression and social anxiety have a negative relationship with happiness and general health (Neto, 2001; cited by Rafiee, 2009).

The findings of many researches show that factors such as self-esteem and interpersonal skills, effective communication, goal-setting and decision-making, problem-solving, determination and recognition of individual values play effective roles in preventing women from being diagnosed with different types of behavioral disorders or at least reducing it and in improving their mental health (Mehdizadeh, 2010).

It seems that unhealthy communication pattern is one of the common problems in families and is surely associated with a wide range of problems and disorders. In this regard, effective communication skills require a strategic and systematic professional attention and training can play a way more determinative role than other options because of the following reasons (Patchin, J. W., and Hinduja, 2010):

- 1) In any case, prevention is better than cure.

- 2) Training is more preventive than anything.
- 3) Training is more culturally and practically effective because it institutionalizes values and norms relative to behavior control.

Now, since we need effective communication with others to do all kinds of social activities, including making friends, marriage, education, employment, fulfillment of daily needs, etc., and if we do not learn these skills well, we will not make progress as we like and we will not be satisfied (Jazayeri & Rahimi, 2008). By taking into consideration the aforementioned points, the researcher attempts to review the following question: does effective communication training affect participants' self-esteem and general health?

Research methodology

This is a semi-experimental with a pretest, posttest with random assignment, a control group and an experimental group. The statistical population of this study was comprised of all women visiting the counseling centers of district 1 of Tehran city in the second half of the year 2012. Moreover, the women participating in the study must have had a middle school degree and they must have been 20 plus years old and at an average social and economic level. The counseling centers of district 1 of Tehran city was selected as the reviewed counseling center using the random sampling method and out of these counseling center, the counseling center of area 10 was selected. 70 women had visited this counseling center in the first half of the year 2012 and 50 of these women showed interest in participating in the effective communication training course and then 30 of them were selected as the research sample using the simple random sampling method. These samples were divided into two groups of 15 (an experimental group and a control group). Therefore, the effective communication skills training was held as 10 two-hour sessions in the counseling center of district 1, area 10 of Tehran. 15 women who were interested in acquiring this skill participated in this course and the communication in this course was either verbal or nonverbal. These women were put in the experimental group. At the end of this course, the samples in the both groups (control and experimental) took the posttest in the same center at the same time and filled out the Aizeng self-esteem questionnaire and the general health questionnaire (GHQ). That is how the data required for reviewing the research hypotheses were collected and the obtained data was analyzed using the SPSS software and the ANCOVA test.

Table 1: a summary of the effective communication training program

First session	Introduction, determination of principles and goals, definition of communication skills, self-esteem and general health
Second session	The effect and role of illogical and irrational beliefs in communication, reformation of recognition and creation of accurate beliefs
Third session	Speaking skills
Fourth session	The importance of listening, why we don't listen well, the barriers on the way of effective listening
Fifth session	Various methods of listening, dynamic listening skills
Sixth session	Awareness of the ours and others' needs and feelings, teaching how to express emotion
Seventh session	Teaching nonverbal skills, how to sit, posture, how to use hands, touch, tone of voice, facial expression, coordination between verbal and nonverbal behaviors
Eighth and	Selection of communication styles, different ways to talk and listen

ninth session	
Tenth session	A brief overview of previous issues and experiences of group members after the two groups take the posttest

Measurement tools

Aizeng’s Self-Esteem Questionnaire: this questionnaire has 30 questions regarding emotional instability and consistency associated with self-esteem which is the opposite of feeling humiliated. The reliability of this scale was calculated to be 90% using the Cronbach’s alpha method and the criterion validity of this scale was calculated to be equal to 80% using the Cooper-Smith Self-esteem Test. This test was taken by 500 male and female middle school seniors in Tehran in order to make sure that this scale is valid and reliable in Iran. Hormozinejad conducted a study on students of Shahid Chamran University and used three methods (split-half, Cronbach’s alpha and Guttman) in order to calculate the reliability coefficient of the self-esteem questionnaire. The reliability coefficients of the self-esteem test are quite satisfactory and desirable.

The general health questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed and developed by Goldberg in order to identify mental disorders except for psychosis. This questionnaire has 28 questions and it has been widely used for detecting mild mental disorders and for the screening of non-psychotic psychological disorders in health centers and other populations in various situations. Goldberg (1980) has reported an 80-percent correlation between the GHQ scores and the result of clinical evaluation of the severity of disorders. Khazaeei (1996) believed that various forms of GHQ have high validity and reliability. In addition, numerous studies in Iran have reviewed various statistical populations of school students, university students and employees and all of them have reported a desirable reliability.

Findings

30 women have participated in this research. The average age of the students was equal to 38.16 years with the standard deviation of 7.6. In the present study, in order to review the research hypothesis, a univariate covariance analysis of variance (ANCOVA) was used. This statistical test was used because in the present study, researchers have used pretest as the control variable in order to control the effect of preparedness and the moderation of the effect of this variable.

Before using the ANCOVA test, some of the important assumptions of this statistical test must be reviewed, because if these assumptions are not observed, the research results might be biased. Presumptions of using analysis of covariance are: normality of the distribution of data, error covariance and homogeneity of the regression lines. These three assumptions were reviewed by the researcher before the analysis of covariance. Fortunately, all of these three assumptions had been observed; which means that the analysis of covariance was fit to be used for analyzing the research data. The results obtained from the covariance test can be seen in the tables below.

Table 2: results of analyzing multivariate analysis of covariance in order to review the impact of effective communication training on the improvement of self-esteem and general health.

Variable	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	F	Significance level	The size of effect	Power of the test
----------	----------------	-------------------	-----------------	---	--------------------	--------------------	-------------------

Group	General health	416.78	1	416.78	58.66	0.001	0.694	1
	Self-esteem	7.62	1	762	14.5	0.001	0.358	0.956
Error	General health	184.7	26	7	-	-		
	Self-esteem	13.66	26	0.52	-	-		
Total	General health	17747	30	-	-	-	-	-
	Self-esteem	15207	30	-	-	-	-	-

The information presented in this table is relevant to the results of the multivariate analysis of covariance test. As it can be seen, with a 99-percent confidence level, it can be claimed that individuals who have taken effective communication training programs in the counseling centers have higher levels of general health and self-esteem. The information presented in the table show that effective communication affects general health more than self-esteem. The size of the effect on general health was equal to 0.694; whereas, the size of the effect on self-esteem was equal to 0.358.

Table 3: results of analysis of covariance in order to review the impact of effective communication training on the improvement of self-esteem

Source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	F	P
Training course	961.7	1	961.7	18.10	0.001
Error	362.32	27	13.09		
Total	1323.62	30	-	-	-

The information presented in the table show that F was calculated to be equal to 18.10 which is more than the F calculated when degree of freedom is equal to 1 and 27 and the significance level is equal to 0.01. Thus, the H₀ of the research indicating lack of a difference is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, with a confidence level of 99%, it can be claimed using effective communication training increases the level of self-esteem.

Table 4: results of analysis of covariance in order to review the impact of effective communication training on the improvement of general health

Source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	F	P
Body symptoms	31.7	1	31.7	11.39	0.002
Anxiety and insomnia	10.74	1	10.74	6.03	0.021

Social performance	40.37	1	40.37	11.28	0.002
Depression	13.74	1	13.74	37.04	0.000

The information presented in the table show that calculated F is higher in all of the components of general health with a degree of freedom of 1 and 27 and the significance level of 0.01. Thus, the H_0 of the research indicating lack of a difference is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, with a confidence level of 99%, it can be claimed using effective communication training increases the level of general health.

Discussion and conclusion

Purpose of this study is to review the effectiveness of effective communication training on the self-esteem and general health of women visiting the counseling centers of the district 1 of Tehran. The primary hypothesis of the research indicates that effective communication training affects general health and self-esteem of women visiting the counseling centers. In order to review this hypothesis, the analysis of covariance was used. The H_0 was rejected and the opposite research indicating that effective communication training affects general health and self-esteem of women visiting the counseling centers was confirmed with $X=1\%$ and a 99-percent confidence level.

The results of this hypothesis comply with the results obtained from the studies conducted by Mahdavian (2003), Akbariani (2000), Ghotaslood (2005), Moghimi (2008) and Markman (1992).

Mahdavian's research shows the effect of communication training on couples' general health. Akbariani and Ghotaslood also believed that communication skill training affects students' general health. Moghimi also showed that communication skill training affects the level of self-esteem of girls in boarding centers.

In expressing this finding, it can be stated that according to Satir's communication theory, who has used communication for family therapy, paid attention to the feelings of family members and sought to create a sense of value in them and to make them more flexible in order for them to change. He induced this skill by communicating with family members. Satir believed that growing families learn how to communicate and send messages well and thus, to create healthy patterns. Therefore, effective communication training and promotion of a sense of valuableness (self-esteem) are quite suitable methods for improving general health and subsequent to it, all of its subscales.

Other results obtained from this study indicated that significant effectiveness of effective communication training on general health (bodily symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social function and depression) of women. The result of this hypothesis complies with the results obtained from studies conducted by Mahdavian (2003), Akbariani (2000), Ghotalsoo (2007) and Anonymous (2008).

Yung believed that people adapt with their external environment as well as their internal one in order to reach self-growth which leads to a reduction in their anxiety. He also believed that a proper communication method must be learnt for facing an environment and by learning this skill, people would be able to adapt with their internal and external environments.

In explaining sleep disorder theory, Maslow says that mentally distressed adults who are relatively insecure feel that they are physically threatened and thus, they limit themselves to familiar and secure situations. They spend their energy to fulfill their security needs more than healthy people. Thus, through

this kind of training and by improving the level of general health, women's sleeping and mental disorders can be affected.

We can refer to Alport's theory in explaining social functions. He believed that we cannot find a healthy individual who has not focused all of their skills on their work. This is a strong sense of commitment. Having a sense of commitment to work is linked with having a sense of responsibility and positive continuity in life. Without having an important and valuable job, commitment, sufficient skills and sacrifice, it is not possible for individuals to mature and have a high level of general health.

In explaining depression, we can refer to Alport's theory. Alport believed that healthy persons accept all of their existential aspects, including their weaknesses without surrendering to their shortcomings. Secondly, they also feel fear and insecurity; thus, they feel less threatened than mentally distressed individuals and are also able to overcome their problems better than those individuals. Thus, through communication skill training, people might become less depressed.

The present study has also faced some limitations such as other researches in the field of humanities that have focused on human beings: since there has been a pretest and a posttest in the study, there is a possibility that interfering factors such as passage of time, motivational factors of respondents and their physical condition might have affected their responses. In addition, women's unawareness of the necessity of life skills training for improving their psychological condition can also be an effective factor which would make them uninterested with these training programs.

Given the research findings, the following recommendations would be presented:

- ✓ The impact of effective communication training on the general health and self-esteem of men shall also be reviewed and the obtained results should be compared with the results associated with women.
- ✓ A bigger sample should be used so that could be extended and generalized more.
- ✓ In order to review the final effect of the skill training, a follow-up is suggested.
- ✓ It is recommended to hold effective communication training programs for families.
- ✓ Communication skill training workshop should be held for adults in pre-marriage counseling.
- ✓ Communication skill training programs should be held for high school students.
- ✓ It is suggested to the Education Organization to make their counselors become familiar with life skill programs.

References

- Amirhosseini, Khosro (2010). *Effective communication skills*. Tehran: parent-teacher assembly press.
- Baumeister, R. F. (Ed.). (2013). *Self-esteem: The puzzle of low self-regard*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Bornstein, P. H., (1986). *Marital therapy: A behavioral-communications approach*. Pergamon.
- Cahill, J. L. (2014). University professors' perceptions about the impact of integrating Google applications on students' communication and collaboration skills. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 1(2), 7.
- Finset, A., Ekeberg, Ø., Eide, H., & Aspegren, K. (2003). Long term benefits of communication skills training for cancer doctors. *Psycho-Oncology*, 12(7), 686-693.
- Lovaas, O. I. (2003). *Teaching Individuals with Developmental Delays: Basic Intervention Techniques*. PRO-ED, Inc., 8700 Shoal Creek Blvd., Austin, TX 78757-6897 (Order no: 10136; \$43).

- Maguire, P., & Pitceathly, C. (2002). Key communication skills and how to acquire them. *Bmj*, 325(7366), 697-700.
- Mehdizadeh, S. (2010). Self-presentation 2.0: Narcissism and self-esteem on Facebook. *Cyber psychology, behavior, and social networking*, 13(4), 357-364.
- Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2010). Cyberbullying and self-esteem. *Journal of school health*, 80(12), 614-621.
- Rafi'ee, Mercedeh (2009). Effectiveness of communication skill training and progressive relaxation on the quality of life and psychological well-being of infertile women, Master's thesis in counseling psychology, University of Tehran.
- Stokoe, E. (2014). The Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM): A method for training communication skills as an alternative to simulated role-play. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 47(3), 255-265.