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The Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Assertiveness and Work Engagement among Staff of Shemiranat Welfare Vocational Centers

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this semi-experimental study based on the pre-post-test method was to discuss the effectiveness of life skills training on assertiveness and work engagement among personnel of Dr. Shariati vocational and rehabilitation center of Tehran. The statistical population consisted of all staff working (18 people) in 2018. Gambriel and Richi (1975) and Selano and Shufili questionnaires (2001) were used to estimate assertiveness and work engagement. The internal coincidence of instruments was 0.88 and 0.95. In total, 60 educational programs were considered as experimental interventions pertaining to life decuple skills (6 hours training for each skill). In order to test the hypothesis, t correlative groups were used. The results showed that experimental intervention influences on the increment of the assertiveness and its subscales (controversial and fundamental) and general work engagement had a negative impact on the attraction and power by interval 95% (p<0/05).

KEYWORDS: *Assertiveness, Work Engagement, Life Skills Training*

INTRODUCTION

Different studies in the field of development of organizations showed that the development of human resources is the main reason for the growth and development of organizations and society.

Peterson and Zimmerman [1] believed that human forces are regarded as the greatest assets of each organization because of the impact of human forces on creativity, innovation, development, and improvement of organizations[2]. Thus, in previous studies eligible human resource have been considered as one of the most valuable and endless capital to grow and develop organizations and countries [3] and [4].Therefore, it can be concluded that communications and assertiveness are the most important factors in organizations. In each organization, managers and personnel should have enough information accessibility to perform their tasks in the continuous communicational process. Due to the importance of social and basic skills in assertiveness is one of the most important roles to maintain

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consistency of interpersonal relations. It is necessary to increase the assertiveness level to obtain satisfactory interpersonal relations. In this sense, assertiveness is the main axle of interpersonal relations and to locate interpersonal relations with others and a method for direct, explicit, and proper [5].

They believed that assertiveness is one of the modified aspects of interpersonal relations. This skill helps individuals in different organizational hierarchical levels play a vital role in interactions among experts and other employees. Thus, Eric Bern stated that a majority of our problems is due to the lack of interaction skill with others at home, society, and environment. Therefore, assertiveness is attributed to social behaviors that help individuals to obtain their targets, particularly those who are able to show their positive or negative emotions. Thus, by training assertiveness, individuals defend their rights honestly, directly, and without impairment of other persons' rights. Impairment in social skills and a lack of assertiveness can damage individuals' mental health. In addition, it can result in anxiety and reduction of self-esteem, depression, and mental diseases [6].

One of the strategies for the development of human resources is work engagement. Work engagement is a level of commitment and participation in which the personnel is interested in the organization and its values. Engaged personnel is stimulated to work in an organization with a maximum level of interest and honor. If employees know landmarks, values, targets, and strategies of their organization they perform their best to obtain organizational targets using physical, emotional, and cognitional potential [7]. In fact, it can be said that work engagement might provide an appropriate working environment for personnel by emphasizing the involvement of mind and emotion with their jobs and competitive advantage. Social engagement and recreation increment is an approach that provides working engagement for society. Engagement is a positive and satisfying emotion that increase with engagement, commitment, and attraction [8]. Given the fact that job is an effective part of individuals' welfare, it also affects their mental and physical health. On top of that, having a job allows people to handle their living expenses. However, it should be considered that experiences in job are different in personnel and job is regarded as a repeated and monotone process till as individual work identity [9]. The organizational

benefit cycles commencement and maintenance are necessary for engagement improvement so that these cycles may lead to the development of occupational and interpersonal relations. Different approaches have been proposed in minimizing the impacts of stressor situations. However, many people have no ability to manage these situations, which ultimately put them in mental and behavioral disorders. One of the most referenced methods in these situations is the awareness about the confrontation manner. Dealing with the problems and obtaining personal and social skills are known as a part of human life fact, which should be realized in a different period as different modes. Thus, in many studies, having ten life skills is recommended to overcome the weakness of the human forces and to increase human resource performance in the organizational environment.

A life skill is defined as abilities, knowledge, behaviors which are learned for happiness and success to overcome unpredicted situations and solve problems. In fact, life skill is a collection of abilities that enable compatible, positive, and suitable behaviors. It lets individuals accept their private and social responsibility and respond to their needs and anticipations without damage. These abilities, known as life skills, [10] cover different dimensions, including decision-making ability, problem-solving, creative thinking and critical thinking, ability to locate effective relation and interpersonal relations, self-awareness, sympathy, ability to confront mental and emotional pressure. WHO5 (1994) emphasized it by different researches including Lagson (2004), Hernandez (2004), and Squat (2005) [11].

In their research, problem-solving is regarded as one of the education of life skills on assertiveness [12] pointed the importance of assertiveness promotion in educational programs, including life skills and positive problem-solving in interpersonal relations. Moreover, in some of the researches conducted by Azizzadeh et al., [13] and Teymorian et al., [14], the relation between life skills and work engagement was confirmed. It could be due to work engagement offering many benefits for organizations and persons directly and indirectly. These benefits are evident in different levels both inside and outside of the organizations [15]. Considering all these issues, the main goals of this paper are to investigate the influence of life skills on the assertiveness and work

engagement of personnel at the Dr. Shariati rehabilitation center of Tehran.

METHOD

This semi-experimental research was performed based on the pre test –post test for one single group approach. Since it was not possible to select a control group, we used an experimental post test (o1-x-o2) by A-B-A plan with all advantages and limitations. In this plan, a pre-test was size from the dependent variable which was obtained before intervention and following test experimental group and after posttest, another size of the dependent variable was obtained. The statistical population consisted of all personnel (150 people) in 5 welfare rehabilitation and vocational centers at Shemiranat in 2018. We used a simple random method for selecting Dr. Shariati center among 5 centers. In this center, girls with mild to median mental inability received rehabilitation services (mental and psychological occupational therapy and taught the professions, including sewing, embroidery, jewelry, decorations, leather crafting, and painting). All trainees and personnel (18 people) were included as a sample due to the limited number of staff in that center. Among 18 people of the sample group who had a background for 1 to 19 years, 15 women and 3 men were selected with ages 24 to 53 years and the mean of 36.61 who 8 were married and 10 were single. Their educational background was graded from high school to master diploma and the majority of them had a bachelor degree (55.56%).

In order to estimate assertiveness and work engagement for personnel, Gabriel and Richi's assertiveness questionnaire (1975) was applied using 40 questions based on the Likert response scale. Each question had 5 options ranging from so much (5), much (4), medium (3), low (2), and very low (1).

Questions were classified into assertiveness and fundamental mode questions, including numbers 13, 13, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 33, 39, 40, 4, 7, 8, and 10, and confrontational assertiveness 32, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, and 37. The higher scores showed higher assertiveness and the lower scores showed low assertiveness. The conceptual reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts' opinions of Educational Sciences University of Isfahan and Alameh Tabatabaee University in 1995-1996. The validity of the questionnaire was obtained by the re-test method 0.82[16]. In the present study, the validity is 0.88. A 5 scales Likert questionnaire [8] was used to estimate work engagement, (very disagree) to (very agree). This questionnaire has three powerful aspects (6 questions) self-donation (5 questions) and attraction (6 questions). In this questionnaire, a high score represents high work engagement and a low score shows low work engagement. In order to determine reliability, an adverse relationship between job scales and occupational fatigue was found [8]. Moreover, another research calculated the internal consistency and reliability of this questionnaire via alpha Cronbach, 0.89[9]. The internal consistency and reliability of this questionnaire were 0.94 and 0.90 [17]. Considering all the above-mentioned results, it can be concluded that each questionnaire has the ability to estimate assertiveness. Thus, each questionnaire was performed to recognize the effectiveness of life skills on assertiveness before and after educational intervention among personnel.

The educational intervention was designed in the format of training of life skills in 10 sessions of 6 hours for 3 months as follows.

Data were described and conferred in terms of two questionnaires during and after the session by using appropriate statistical methods.

Table 1. Educational protocol of life skill

Number of session	Type of skill	Aims	Educational content	Homework
1	Self-awareness	Aware from strength and weakness, aware from emotions, think about specifications, abilities, weakness, increase sympathy	Familiarize with self-awareness and state insights of staff, cognition, review skill by expert and staff, feedback by them, awareness form	Explain and describe job, discussion in the field of questions
2	Sympathy	Imagine himself instead of other, enhance behaviors and altruism and help others and having protective resources like family and friends	Familiarize with sympathy skills, feedback by session, discuss task, define one of the life skill (sympathy), parents' insight on childish methods, family values and our thoughts on culture and tradition	Explain and describe manner of doing, and discussion on forms
3	Effective communication	Generally, verbal and non-verbal is proportionate with our culture enables our thought and this empowerment is effective to state our dreams and needs and fears. This skills means guidance and suitable conclusion	Familiarize with communicational skill, feedback, discuss previous sessions, practical exercise and defend our right without aggression, offer suitable personality for others, writer Dr. Tylor Hartman and offer form	Explain and describe the manner of doing and respond the questions of Hartman' personality half face, discuss and respond to questions
4	Interpersonal relations	Establish and maintain friendly relationships with others that results to mental and social health, maintain good relations with other members of family, interaction with people, end relationship, recognize borders among people and participation and cooperation	Receive feedback by previous session, discussion and negotiation for previous sessions, familiarize with customs, behaviors, values, personalities, needs, central motivation and offer form	Explain and describe manner of doing, and discussion on forms
5	Confront with emotions	Familiarize with anger control, identify their emotions, confront with sever emotions and practical methods to control anger	Receive feedback, discussion and negotiation and its effective factors	Explain and describe manner of doing, and discussion on forms

6	Confront with mental pressure	Familiarize with skills to confront with stress, emotions management (like stress, anger, tension, anxiety) confront with unchangeable situations, establish the changes in physical environment or life style, identify stressors, identify its effects and our reaction to control it that is the actions reduce stress	Receive feedback previous session, discuss in previous sessions, relaxation educations, educate emotions by writing, speaking, sport, health nutritional habits, sufficient sleep, strong relationship, recreation, educate procedural method as 3 modes: before status, three modes status, sympathy part or positive feedback, reasonable part, status in special condition, disarm, to change the subject	Explain and describe manner of doing, and discussion on forms Practices like relaxation by numbering converse digits or good memory
7	Decision-making	Familiarize with decision making, select aim, that is real targets and ready to change and decision for changes	Receive feedback from previous session, discuss and negotiation, prioritize its aims including self-lean, assert against others, reading, prioritize important decisions like job, spouse…. avoidance decision, emergency decision, emotional decision, movement decision, logical decision	Explain and describe manner of doing, and discussion on forms And apply exemplar in the field of education
8	Solve problem	Ability to identify problems, reasons and evaluate them, need help to solve conflict, familiarize with others	Receive feedback from previous session, familiarize with its definition, select accurate strategy, define problem, find solution, evaluate solutions and select the best ones. educate the effective solutions (say no), weekly training on saying no and write them on note book, mental image, educate suitable strategy for others, 7 methods to say no	Explain and describe manner of doing,
9	Creativity thinking	Enable person to solve problem and decision by new thoughts, discover and select solution by less mental, time and financial cost, coordination between logical thought and non-	Receive feedback, discussion and negotiation on positive specifications, ability for visual fact, educate strategy for creativity thinking, the specifications for creativity	Explain and describe manner of doing, and discussion on forms

10	Critical thinking	logical thought, pay attention to problems, situation and something which are neglected by others, unify between different aspects and what they not see	thinking which are not see by others
		Ability to analyze information and experiences, evaluate the factors that influence our insights and behaviors (values, pressure of peers and media), accurate ability for creativity thinking, better and effective communication with others and better decision	Receive feedback on previous session, discuss members' exercises, educate creative methods and questions on creativity thinking and offer form	Explain and describe manner of doing, and ask question

Findings:

The data was collected by two-steps test and analyzed using a t-parametric test (because of remote estimating scale for assertiveness and work engagement in pre and post-test) where the separation was as follows.

The first hypothesis of the research: training life skills is effective on the Shariati rehabilitation and professional center personnel's assertiveness.

Table 2. Descriptive indicators pertain to points of assertiveness

Indicators	Fundamental assertiveness		Confrontational assertiveness		Assertiveness	
	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test
Average	48/94	54/28	57/44	63/00	130/67	140/83
Deviance	8/748	6/488	10/662	9/542	18/506	16/100
Variance	76/52	42/095	113/673	91/059	342/471	259/206

As indicated, there was a difference between the average score of assertiveness in pre and post-test as if the assertiveness scores increased after the end of the period. In order to test the significance level, the t-equal test was used (see Table 3).

Table 3. T-test indicators for equality assertiveness in pre and post test

Scale	Pre test	Post test	Number	Average	Average deviance	Freedom degree	T-value	Sig.
Fundamental assertiveness	28/94	54/28	18	-5/333	1/704	17	-3/131	0/05
Confrontational assertiveness	57/44	63/00	18	-5/556	2/463	17	-2/256	0/05
Assertiveness	130/67	140/83	18	-10/167	3/948	17	-2/575	0/05

Table 4. Descriptive indicators of work engagement scores

Indicators	Donation		Attraction		Self-forces		Total	
	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test
Average	18/44	19/83	20/94	23/83	21/61	24/33	61/0	68/00
Deviance	5/159	4/567	5/230	4/780	4/448	3/481	13/451	11/787
Variance	26/614	20/853	27/350	22/853	18/781	14/118	180/941	138/941

The outcomes of the t-test showed that life skills training could increase fundamental assertiveness and confrontational ones at the end of the course.

Second hypothesis: training life skill is effective on the Shariati rehabilitation and professional center personnel's work engagement.

As indicated in Table 4, there was a difference between work engagement of personnel in pre and post-test due to an increase in work engagement after the end of the course. The results of the t-equal group test were used for calculating job engagement scores in pre and post-test (see Table 5).

Table 5. T-test indicators for job engagement scores in pre and post test

Scale	Pre test average	Posttest average	Number	Difference	Deviance error	Freedom degree	T-value	Sig.
Donation	147/44	19/83	18	-1/389	./797	17	-1/743	0/05
Absorption	20/94	23/83	18	-2/889	./779	17	-3/708	0.05
Self-strong	21/61	24/33	18	-2/722	./824	17	-3/305	./05
Work engagement	61/0	68/00	18	-7	1/906	17	-3/672	./05

Table 5 shows that training of life skills increased personnel's work engagement in three subscales, including donation, attraction, and self-strong at the end of the course.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of life skills training on the assertiveness and job engagement among the personnel of the Shemiranat welfare center. The results showed that life skill training increases assertiveness significantly (appropriate social behavior that helps people to obtain their aims) and work engagement (commitment and participation of the personnel). During the designed educational short-term course in the context of 10 sessions 6 hours for 3 months, the level of assertiveness and work engagement increased. It was in line with the findings of Peterson and Zimmerman [1] that these kinds of programs lead to growth and development in human resources. Because, in cases that personnel are not willing to work, they make problems for themselves and it demotivates them in achieving the organizational aims [18]. Thus, according to Mcintyre et al., assertiveness is one of the amendable aspects of interpersonal relations and this skill helps people to confront subordinators and coworkers.

In this regard, life skills training, which is defined as a ability to provide compatible and positive behaviors, enables individuals to accept personal and social responsibilities in daily problems without affecting other people [10]. The results of the current research were in line with the findings of previous studies, including Lagson (2004), Hernandez (2004) and Scott (2005) [19] on the effectiveness of education and problem-solving as one of the important aspects. It suggested customizable assertiveness for life skills and problem-solving in social and interpersonal relations [12]. The results studies [13] and [14] also found a relationship between life skills and work engagement. Similarly, it showed a relationship between organizational communication and work engagement [20]. Accordingly, it is clear that successful life skill training (decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, and personal relations, awareness, sympathy, confront with mental, and emotional pressure) increases assertiveness and work engagement.

Research Limitations:

From the findings point of view, it would be interesting in future studies to generalize the results of the most important reason for each intervention that is affecting patients' prescriptions. In fact, not only different task increases personal motivation and directs them into intensive activities but also there are demandable specifications in which person tries to obtain better results and this specification directs person (learner and coach) into the destination. It is also recommended to add a witness or control group to

anticipate intermixing. On the other hand, it is possible that during two tests, there would be a controllable or non-controllable event for the coach, instructor, or company to participate in a new educational program that results to improve specifications, including assertiveness and work engagement.

Suggestions:

- In order to remove limitations, a control or witness group would be determined to increase the level of confidence.
- It is necessary to revise educational protocol considering personnel's needs to provide an effective educational plan for them.
- A comprehensive literature review is recommended to identify tenth life skills and educate more.
- It is necessary to perform the test again as the following course to reject limitations.
- Continuous education of life skills can be regarded as a plan to establish new conditions and be effective assertiveness and work engagement.

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