Comparison of the Effectiveness of Adolescent-Specific Psychological Security Training with Adolescent-Centered Mindfulness Training on the Altruism of Adolescents with Psychological Insecurity

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study was to compare the effectiveness of adolescent-specific psychological security training with adolescent-centered mindfulness training on the well-being of adolescents experiencing psychological insecurity.

Methods: This study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, and follow-up phases, involving two experimental groups and one control group. The population included all male students aged 14 to 16 years in the city of Isfahan. Sixty students were selected through convenience sampling and then randomly assigned to the study groups. The research instrument was the Ryff Well-Being Questionnaire (1989). All three groups were assessed at three stages: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up using this instrument. The first experimental group received well-being training, while the second group received adolescent-centered mindfulness training. The control group was placed on a waiting list. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (repeated measures analysis of variance).

Findings: The results indicated that both methods were effective in improving the well-being of these adolescents, and there was no significant difference between the two experimental groups in this regard ($P = 0.05$).

Conclusion: It can be concluded that both methods can enhance the psychological well-being of this group of adolescents.

Keywords: Psychological Security, Adolescents, Mindfulness, Well-Being, Adolescents.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a stage in the life cycle where individuals experience various physical, cognitive, moral, and behavioral changes (Khaleghi et al., 2023). During this period, adolescents undergo role and responsibility changes based on societal expectations, which may lead to challenges in interpersonal relationships,

particularly with the opposite sex, and in career and academic decisions. These challenges can make adolescents irritable, indecisive, unstable, anxious, and worried. Some researchers refer to this period as identity formation, while others describe it as a time of heightened emotionality, psychological turmoil, and pressure (Khaleghi et al., 2023).

All adolescents seek identity and experience intense anxiety and mental discomfort during identity crises due to their inability to integrate various aspects of their personality into a coherent and acceptable self. This struggle can lead to psychological insecurity, affecting their social, academic, and occupational performance, as well as their moral and religious values (Yousefi et al., 2011).

Psychological security begins to develop at birth through attachment and continues throughout life. Although primary caregivers play a significant role in establishing initial security, later life experiences also contribute to either reinforcing or undermining this sense of security.

Research indicates that 28% of adolescents face mental health issues (Burešová et al., 2020). High levels of adolescent turmoil and the awakening of sexual drives are common experiences, but the extent of psychological insecurity varies based on numerous factors. Adolescents strive for independence from their families, which can lead to decreased communication with parents and a desire to solve problems independently, despite their limited experience. This situation, combined with academic and daily responsibilities, increases anxiety and worry (Khabazshirazi et al., 2022).

Additionally, adolescents from families experiencing issues such as poverty, parental conflicts, and parental addiction may experience heightened insecurity. These conditions make them perceive the world as unsafe, leading to self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. Psychological insecurity manifests in various ways, including intrusive thoughts, negative emotions, social anxiety, low self-esteem, poor body image, anxiety about goals and relationships, and academic and test-related stress. Behavioral changes, restlessness, sleep problems, panic attacks, mood swings, appetite changes, physical symptoms like headaches and stomachaches, difficulty concentrating, avoidance of enjoyable activities, focus on potential threats, and nail-biting or hair-pulling are common signs of psychological insecurity in adolescents.

Research suggests that unpleasant life events can harm mental health and related variables, including altruism, which involves efforts to enhance others' well-being, often at personal risk or cost. While some argue that humans are inherently self-interested, recent research shows that cooperation is a primary motivator. Altruism, closely linked to psychological security, is fostered by it, whereas psychological insecurity leads to avoidance, anxiety, distrust, and pessimism towards others (Homant, 2013; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

Various studies have focused on adolescent psychological insecurity. For instance, Buresova et al. (2020) found that unsafe environments contribute to psychological insecurity in adolescents (Burešová et al., 2020). Chen and Wu (2020) showed that parental conflicts can lead to emotional insecurity in adolescents (Chen et al., 2020), while Mendo-Lazaro et al. (2019) highlighted the role of parental acceptance-rejection in emotional instability (Mendo-Lázaro et al., 2019). Shankar-Krishnan et al. (2021) found significant relationships between psychological insecurity, poor body image, and eating disorders among adolescents (Shankar-Krishnan et al., 2021), and Hauber et al. (2020) demonstrated that insecure attachment underpins psychological insecurity in this age group. Given the importance of adolescence for personality development and future life, preventive and corrective attention to adolescents' psychological insecurity is crucial (Hauber et al., 2020). In this regard, researchers designed and validated an educational package to enhance adolescents' security, covering perceived self-security, spiritual security, perceived moral and legal security, social capacity-based security, and family and relational security. This study examines the effectiveness of this package on the psychological well-being and altruism of adolescents with psychological insecurity. The findings will contribute to the validation of a culturally specific educational package and enrich the literature on adolescent mental health, well-being, and altruism.

2. Methods

2.1. Study design and Participant

This experimental and quasi-experimental study with pre-test, post-test, and follow-up phases involved both experimental and control groups. The study population included all high school male students in Isfahan experiencing psychological insecurity. Forty students scoring below average on the Edmonson Psychological Security Questionnaire (1999), which consists of 21 items with good psychometric properties, were selected through convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria were: age between 15 and 18, male gender, and family consent for participation.

Exclusion criteria included simultaneous participation in other psychological training programs, non-compliance with assignments, and disrupting the educational group atmosphere.

Following necessary approvals and sample selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, the experimental and control groups were assessed before and after the intervention and 45 days post-intervention using the Psychological Well-Being and Altruism Questionnaires. While the control group was on a waiting list, the experimental groups received eight 90-minute training sessions conducted in a counseling center by the researcher under the supervision of academic advisors. Shows the mindfulness and psychological well-being training content. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (repeated measures analysis of variance).

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Altruism

Ashton et al.'s (1998) scale was used to measure altruism, scored on a five-point Likert scale, including two main dimensions of empathy and forgiveness, with 16 items. The internal consistency was above 0.73 as reported by Ashton et al. (1998) and confirmed by Namati, Badri-Gargari, and Khadem (2022) in Iran, with an internal consistency of 0.73 in this study (Ashton et al., 1998).

2.3. Interventions

2.3.1. Psychological Security Training

The psychological security training intervention aims to enhance adolescents' psychological security by addressing self-awareness, identity formation, family dynamics, spiritual values, social support, emotional regulation, and ethical behavior. Each session is designed to build on previous learnings, providing practical skills and strategies to manage psychological insecurity and promote well-being.

Session 1: Introduction and Establishing Group Dynamics

Participants are introduced to each other and the group leader, establishing therapeutic relationships and setting group goals and rules. The benefits of psychological security, its barriers, and influential factors are discussed.

Session 2: Enhancing Self-Awareness

Techniques for improving self-awareness are introduced, including recognizing strengths and weaknesses by reflecting on the past and present and seeking feedback from others. Methods for achieving self-acceptance and boosting self-esteem are also covered.

Session 3: Identity Formation

Participants explore three dimensions of identity—who they are, what they have, and what they want. Values identification techniques and strategies for improving responsibility are taught.

Session 4: Family Relationships

The importance of family bonds in psychological security is discussed, along with strategies for coping with family problems using problem-focused approaches. Emphasis is placed on parental acceptance, spending time with family, and altruism.

Session 5: Spiritual and Moral Values

The role of spiritual and moral values in psychological security and coping with psychological pain is highlighted. Exercises for finding meaning and understanding its role in preventing risky behaviors are included.

Session 6: Social Support and Problem-Solving

Participants learn about the significance of social support in overcoming challenges. Skills for effective problem-solving in interpersonal relationships and managing conflicts are taught, enhancing social competence.

Session 7: Emotion Regulation and Communication Skills

Techniques for adaptive regulation of negative emotions that disrupt relationships and daily life are introduced. Communication skills for managing peer pressure are emphasized.

Session 8: Ethical Behavior and Respect for Rules

The role of ethics and respect for laws in improving relationships and gaining social support is discussed. Virtues as a means to achieve lasting happiness are introduced and practiced.

2.3.2. Adolescent-Centered Mindfulness Training

The adolescent-centered mindfulness training intervention focuses on reducing symptoms of nomophobia (fear of being without a mobile phone) and enhancing mindfulness. This intervention includes breathing exercises, body scans, mindful awareness of emotions and senses, and activities to practice mindfulness in daily life. Parental involvement and compassion meditation are also incorporated to support adolescents' emotional regulation and overall well-being (Bahreini et al., 2022; Fulambarkar et al., 2023; Shayegh Borojeni et al., 2019; Taheri et al., 2020).

Session 1: Introduction and Understanding Nomophobia

Participants undergo a pre-test, introduce themselves, and learn about nomophobia, mindfulness, and the neurobiology of mindfulness. They receive guidance on integrating mindfulness practices into daily life and reducing nomophobia symptoms, with parental participation in a mindful compassion meditation.

Session 2: Mindful Breathing

Breathing exercises, including mindful and abdominal breathing, are taught to manage anxiety when without a mobile phone. The concept of a calm mind versus a busy mind is illustrated using a glitter jar. Participants receive a sleep meditation exercise as homework.

Session 3: Body Awareness and Positive Memories

Body scan exercises are practiced, along with "good memory" exercises to recall positive social interactions without a mobile phone. Breathing exercises are reinforced, and participants are assigned homework.

Session 4: Present Moment Awareness

Techniques for maintaining present moment awareness, such as the water glass exercise, are introduced. Strategies for understanding emotional processes without mobile phone access and mindful movements are practiced, with homework assigned.

Session 5: Sensory Mindfulness and Depression Relief

Participants practice mindful breathing and sensory awareness exercises. Mindful meditation for depression relief is introduced for managing negative thoughts and emotions without a mobile phone, followed by homework.

Session 6: Emotion-Focused Mindfulness

Mindfulness exercises related to emotions, including a mindful emotions meditation and the "I feel" game, are practiced. Participants write about their mindfulness experiences and receive homework.

Session 7: Thought-Focused Mindfulness

Breathing exercises and mindfulness practices related to thoughts are taught. The whiteboard exercise for accepting negative thoughts without judgment and tree meditation are included, with homework assigned.

Session 8: Environmental and Relational Mindfulness

Mindful awareness of the environment and relationships is practiced. Compassionate actions and exercises to foster kindness are introduced, with participants receiving homework.

2.4.   Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (repeated measures analysis of variance) via SPSS-26.

3.   Findings and Results

In terms of demographic characteristics, in the control group, 7 participants (43.75%) were studying humanities, 6 participants (37.5%) were studying experimental sciences, and 3 participants (18.75%) were studying mathematics. In the psychological security group, 8 participants (44.44%) were studying humanities, 6 participants (33.33%) were studying experimental sciences, and 4 participants (22.22%) were studying mathematics. In the adolescent-centered mindfulness group, 8 participants (44.44%) were studying humanities, 5 participants (27.78%) were studying experimental sciences, and 5 participants (27.78%) were studying mathematics. The results of the chi-square test indicate that there is no significant difference in the frequency of academic disciplines among the three research groups ($p > .05$).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Altruism Variable in Research Groups at Three Time Points

Variable	Time Point	Control Group (M, SD)	Psychological Security Group (M, SD)	Adolescent-Centered Mindfulness Group (M, SD)
Altruism	Pre-test	20.81 (4.52)	27.31 (5.96)	29.39 (9.09)
	Post-test	20.83 (4.07)	37.81 (8.72)	37.11 (6.93)
	Follow-up	21.37 (4.39)	38.31 (3.74)	30.78 (6.35)

As shown in Table 1, in the variable of altruism, the psychological security training group and the adolescent-centered mindfulness training group demonstrated more significant changes in the post-test and follow-up stages compared to the control group.

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test showed that altruism at all three stages—pre-test, post-test, and follow-up—had a normal distribution ($p > .05$), equality of error variance ($p > .05$), and equality of variance-covariance matrix (via M-Box test) ($p > .05$). Also, the Mauchly's test was significant, indicating that the assumption of sphericity was not met. Due

to the violation of the sphericity assumption, the results are presented based on the Greenhouse-Geisser statistic in the final analysis.

Table 2

Results of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Altruism

Source		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Power
Within-Subjects	Time	1123.56	1.5	746.56	21.03	.001	.27	
	Time × Group	1060.81	3	352.43	9.93	.001	.26	
	Error (Time)	3045.59	85.78	35.50				
Between-Subjects	Group	5754.55	2	2877.27	36.67	.001	.59	
	Error	3845.32	49	78.47				

Due to the violation of the sphericity assumption, as seen in Table 2 for the altruism variable, within-subjects effects, the factor of time (F = 21.03, df = 1.5, p < .01) and the interaction of time and group (F = 9.93, df = 3, p < .01) show that there are significant differences in altruism over time and in the interaction of time with the group (the three research groups). The partial eta squared for the time factor is .27, with a power of 1.00, and for the interaction of time with the group, it is .26, with a power of .99. These results indicate that 27% and 26% of the variance in altruism for the time factor and the interaction of time with the group,

respectively, are due to the independent variable (one of the training methods in the study). The power of these tests is 99% and 100%, respectively. As shown in the between-subjects effects section in Table 3, there is a significant difference in altruism among the groups (p < .01). The partial eta squared for the group factor is .59, with a power of 1.00, indicating that 59% of the variance in altruism is due to differences between at least one of the experimental groups (either psychological security training or adolescent-centered mindfulness training) and the control group.

Table 3

Results of Bonferroni Post Hoc Test for Pairwise Comparison of Time and Group in Altruism

Variable	Row	Baseline Group	Comparison Group	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance
Time	1	Pre-test	Post-test	-6.07	1.21	.001
	2		Follow-up	-4.32	.84	.001
	3	Post-test	Follow-up	1.76	.78	.09
Group	4	Control (Baseline)	Psychological Security	-13.47	1.51	.001
	5		Adolescent-Centered Mindfulness	-11.43	1.63	.001
	6	Psychological Security	Adolescent-Centered Mindfulness	2.05	1.45	.49

As seen in Table 3, in the variable of altruism, there are significant differences between the pre-test and post-test, and pre-test and follow-up, but no significant difference between post-test and follow-up. Based on the means, altruism increased from the pre-test to the post-test, but remained unchanged from the post-test to the follow-up. At the group level, there are significant differences between the psychological security group and the adolescent-centered mindfulness group compared to the control group (p < .01). However, there is no significant difference between the two educational groups (p > .05). Therefore, based on the quantitative results, it can be concluded that both the psychological security training and the adolescent-centered

mindfulness training were equally effective in improving altruism among adolescents with psychological insecurity.

4.   Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to compare the effectiveness of adolescent-specific psychological security training with adolescent-centered mindfulness training on the well-being of adolescents experiencing psychological insecurity. The results of repeated measures analysis of variance and Bonferroni post hoc tests showed significant differences between the psychological security group and the adolescent-centered mindfulness group compared to the control group, but no significant difference between the two educational groups. Although no previous studies have

compared these two educational packages on altruism among adolescents with insecurity, the results align with other studies demonstrating the effectiveness of various methods on positive constructs in adolescence. These include prior findings (Bahreini et al., 2022) on the effectiveness of cognitive therapy on psychological well-being in female adolescents, Esmaeili et al. (2014) on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral intervention on adolescent well-being (Esmaeeli et al., 2014; Ghadiri Bahram Abadi & Michaeli Manee, 2015) on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral stress training on psychological well-being (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2022), on the effectiveness of emotion regulation training on emotional well-being in girls (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2022; Shankar-Krishnan et al., 2021), and on the effectiveness of character strength training on psychological well-being (Ebrahimi & Esmaeili, 2023). However, these results do not align with findings on the effectiveness of these methods on aggression and emotion regulation in adolescents (Shayegh Borojeni et al., 2019) on the effectiveness of adolescent-centered mindfulness on self-esteem in adolescents (Taheri et al., 2020).

In explaining the effectiveness of psychological security training on altruism in adolescents with psychological insecurity, it can be stated that psychological well-being implies that individuals have more altruistic motivations rather than selfish ones and can trust others (Matud et al., 2019). Therefore, it seems that the educational axes, strategies, and techniques in psychological security training have been considered to improve the altruism and altruistic behaviors of adolescents. The five main areas of this training included feeling secure with self-acceptance, better relationships, purposefulness and finding meaning, discovering social capacities, and adhering to ethics and social laws. Each of these methods included strategies and techniques that were effective in enhancing altruism, such as improving self-esteem, stress management training, assertiveness training, self-acceptance, and fostering hope and purposefulness. Each of these strategies, along with their techniques, could have improved interpersonal relationships, resulting in positive feedback and increased empathy and altruism.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

This study, like other research, had limitations such as non-random selection of participants and the same individual serving as both researcher and educator. It is suggested that future studies use random selection and separate the roles of researcher and educator. Additionally, school counselors are encouraged to use psychological security enhancement methods to improve adolescent well-being.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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