Effectiveness of communication skills training through painting therapy on parent-child relationship and social skills of female second-grade elementary students

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of communication skills training through painting therapy on parent-child relationships and social skills of female students. **Method:** This was a quasi-experimental study with pretest, posttest and follow-up design which using experimental and control groups. Among all second-grade elementary female students in Takestan City, 24 participants were selected using available sampling method and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The students in the experimental group participated in 11 sessions of communication skills training based on paint therapy which taken from group art therapy intervention (Martin, 2009) and previous intervention protocols (Ehsanpour, 2016; Shelani, 2015) and the control group did not receive any intervention. Data were gathered using parent-child relationship scale (Pianta, 1994) and social skills rating scale (teacher form) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up phases and analyzed using repeated measures analysis of covariance. **Results:** The results showed that in the experimental group, compared to the control group, after communication skills through painting therapy, the scores of closeness dimension in parent-child relationships (F= 28.09, P=.001) and social skills (F= 44.68, P=.001) had increased significantly and the scores of dependency (F= 22.80, P=.001) and conflict (F= 133.58, P=.001) dimension in parent-child relationships had significantly decreased. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings, it can be concluded that to improve parent-child relationships and children's social skills, communication skills training through painting therapy can be used.

Keywords: *Communication Skills, Painting Therapy, Parent-Child Relationship, Social Skills.*

Introduction

One of the suggested ways to identify and control the conflict between parents and children is to teach communication skills in the family. Unfortunately, most families cannot establish a healthy and favorable relationship with their children due to neglect or lack of familiarity with the ways of communicating with them, and they lose them. The lack of communication skills for children and in their future will be accompanied by a series of negative consequences that can include a wide range of people's social behaviors (Mata et al., 2021).

Many problems and issues of adulthood are rooted in childhood and it is necessary to pay attention to them from the very beginning; On the other hand, adult problem-solving methods cannot be used for children and that too cognitively, so effective educational methods and treatment suitable for children should be scientifically investigated and researched. One of the methods used to facilitate education in children is art therapy. Art Therapists Association of England (2014) considers art therapy as a form of psychotherapy that uses art as a primary means of communication.

As mentioned, one of these educational programs is teaching through painting therapy, which is one of the main branches of art therapy. Painting therapy does not mean nurturing painters and teaching painting, but rather providing opportunities for the individual to freely express his feelings, emotions, needs, and even knowledge in the way he wishes through colors and lines. Drawing as an excellent tool to communicate due to its low cost and availability, appeal to children and making them interested in doing exercises, has many relative advantages compared to other methods of improving communication skills and can be one of the therapeutic methods. (Hoza et al., 2015). More than being useful in diagnosing mental disorders in adults, it is suitable for recognizing and treating the problems of maladjusted, aggressive and restless children and provides a platform for such children to express their creativity and ability. In the process of producing works of art, the child reveals to us more than a product and actually a part of himself. How he thinks, how he feels, and how he sees (Lewick, 1983). In painting therapy, spontaneous non-judgmental expression allows the individual to speak freely about repressed thoughts and feelings without the threat of reaction from others. The basis of painting therapy is to bring participants into the structural process of art to indirectly express their thoughts and feelings. By projecting their inner life through painting, people can overcome their emotions and make their personality dynamic. Art therapists consider the use of painting to be effective in helping to develop appropriate interactions (Wolf, 2003). Therefore, according to the mentioned provisions, the basic research issue is whether teaching communication skills through drawing therapy is effective on parent-child relationships and social skills in children?

Method

This was a quasi-experimental study with pretest, posttest and follow-up design which using experimental and control groups. Among all second-grade elementary female students in Takestan City, 24 participants were selected using available sampling method and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The students in the experimental group participated in 11 sessions of communication skills training based on paint therapy which taken from group art therapy intervention (Martin, 2009) and previous intervention protocols (Ehsanpour, 2016;

Shelani, 2015) and the control group did not receive any intervention. Data were gathered using parent-child relationship scale (Pianta, 1994) and social skills rating scale (teacher form) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up phases and analyzed using repeated measures analysis of covariance.

Results

The results showed that in the experimental group, compared to the control group, after communication skills through painting therapy, the scores of closeness dimension in parent-child relationships (F= 28.09, P=.001) and social skills (F= 44.68, P=.001) had increased significantly and the scores of dependency (F= 22.80, P=.001) and conflict (F= 133.58, P=.001) dimension in parent-child relationships had significantly decreased.

Conclusion

The results obtained from this research showed that teaching communication skills through painting therapy is effective in increasing social skills. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is confirmed. These findings are in line with the results of previous studies on the effectiveness of painting therapy on improving social skills. The second finding showed that teaching communication skills through drawing therapy improves students' behavioral skills

Since children, unlike adults, cannot express themselves easily and are not even able to understand how their difficult situation is, therefore drawing therapy encourages children to express themselves non-verbally in a safe environment and thereby develop social-behavioral skills.

The third finding showed that teaching communication skills through painting therapy has a significant effect on increasing closeness in parent-child relationships.

The fourth finding showed that teaching communication skills through painting therapy has a significant effect on reducing conflict in parent-child relationships of students. The fifth finding showed that teaching communication skills through painting therapy has a significant effect on reducing dependence in parent-child relationships of students.

Apart from group participation, this method attracts the child's attention and concentration more and better due to the attractive and enjoyable atmosphere and artistic activities.

Although it seems simple to communicate especially among children in interaction with the family; But it requires the application of tips and observance of principles that can be easily facilitated by choosing the right method. Therefore, according to the obtained results, it is suggested that therapists and specialists in the field of child and adolescent mental health can benefit from this method. Also, it is suggested to conduct a similar study in different strata and in boys as well, which was not discussed in this research. One of the limitations of the present study was the lack of research background that has investigated the relationship between parents and children with behavioral and social skills. Research centers and researchers should pay more attention to this topic.

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