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Effectiveness of a Training Package Based on the Theory of Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills on Psychological Capital Components in Adults

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A B S T R A C T

Objective: This research aimed to assess the effectiveness of an educational package based on the theory of five-factor positive thinking skills on psychological capital in adults.

Methods and Materials: The method was a quasi-experimental design with two groups and three stages: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The sample consisted of 40 individuals (20 females and 20 males), selected through purposive sampling and randomly assigned to either the experimental group (20 people, males and females) or the control group (20 people, males and females). The Psychological Capital Questionnaire by Luthans et al. (2007) was used for data collection. The training group received 8 sessions of 100 minutes each, while the control group received no training. Data were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance and Bonferroni post hoc test.

Findings: Results indicated that in the variable of psychological capital, the components of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience showed significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test/follow-up stages ($p < 0.01$), meaning that the training in five-factor positive thinking skills was effective in the post-test phase and this effectiveness was sustained and enhanced up to the follow-up stage.

Conclusion: Given the impact of the findings, the use of this training in psychological associations and counseling centers is recommended.

Keywords: *Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills Training, Psychological Capital, Adults.*

1. Introduction

Positive psychology is a field that makes life valuable and guides individuals and communities towards growth. It studies the conditions and processes that lead to the optimal functioning of individuals, relationships, and affairs. The approach based on human strengths is a philosophical viewpoint where individuals are considered capable. This means that every person has potential within themselves and their support systems, which, when stimulated with new experiences, cognitions, and skills, blend together leading to improved mental health and a better quality of life (Mohammadi et al., 2021; Saadati & Parsakia, 2023).

Psychological phenomena such as happiness, positive thinking, hope, and wisdom, which stem from positive mental experiences, are at the focus of positive psychology studies. Positive thinking, as one of the positive cognitive capacities of humans, plays a fundamental role in the physical and mental health of individuals. In the spectrum of life, we inevitably face various pleasing and disappointing issues and events. The way we think and deal with these occurrences can guarantee our physical and mental health (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022). Seligman (2018) defines positive thinking as not merely repeating joyful thoughts in one's mind, nor does it mean denying or avoiding sadness or anger (Seligman, 2018). Researchers, after twenty years of exploration, have discovered the basis of optimism and positive thinking. The basis of positive thinking and optimism is not in hopeful statements or envisioning success, but in how people think about causes. Optimism is a cognitive structure related to the motivation to strive for optimists and to cease trying for pessimists (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Optimism arises from positivity and can be considered as a positive attitude or mood that is connected with what an individual expects to occur in the near or distant future (Peterson, 2000). Our thoughts are the most powerful part of our existence, shaping all our relationships. The way we view ourselves, our environment, and others is derived from the thoughts that flow in our minds daily. Right thinking is an art and skill that can be learned and applied. Generally, a skill refers to a learning process that, following knowledge, turns into an attitude and ultimately behavior. The goal is to create behavior that continues and improves through practice and persistence (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022). Unlike temporary pleasurable happiness, optimism is a trait. Optimism is a mental tendency to discover negative scenarios related to the future (Seligman, 2018). The Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills (FFPTS) theory was first introduced by Chamzadeh Ganavati in 2014. It is defined as "learning to think well, changing negative attitudes, and how to analyze events," where an individual, considering all aspects of an issue, develops and maintains a positive view, consisting of five factors: 1) Cognition of thought, feeling, behavior, 2) Positive self-talk, 3) My role, 4) Challenge, and 5) Replacement. This model is a simultaneous intermediary model. The absorption effect, leading to capacity building, essentially brings new skills into the human cognitive-behavioral repertoire. The second, third, and fourth factors, namely: Positive self-talk, My role, and Challenge, are considered as intermediary capacity builders of the model. The constructs of the theory are closely linked and interdependent in the overall process of achieving positive goals and outcomes and have a direct impact on behavior (Seligman, 2018).

Optimistic experiences affect psychological outcomes and predict changes in immune system and physical health. The positive relationship between optimistic experiences and immunity has been proven through cellular mediation. Changes in optimism are also linked to changes in immunity through cellular mediation (Segerstrom & Sephton, 2010). In this context, Kianpour Barjoyee and colleagues (2022) conducted a study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of positive thinking training on perceived stress, metacognitive beliefs, and death anxiety in women with breast cancer. The results indicated that positive thinking training with positive thinking techniques reduced perceived stress, metacognitive beliefs, and death anxiety in these women. Additionally, there is evidence that a positive mood increases anterior cingulate cortex activity during problem-solving, possibly enhancing insightful rather than merely analytical approaches. In general, the anterior and posterior cingulate cortex and parts of the right hemisphere play a special role in thoughtful problem-solving (Kianpour Barjoee et al., 2022). Almeida and Ifrim (2023) in their research titled "Psychometric Benefits of Positive Thinking Skills Scale among Portuguese Adults," tested 220 adults aged 18 to 62. They stated that positive thinking leads to more positive emotions, adaptive behaviors, and better problem-solving. Positive thoughts can be inspiring for individuals and enhance psychological health (Almeida & Ifrim, 2023). Yaghobi and Khalilpoor (2022) examined the effect of positive mood on increasing hope and stated that a positive mood increases hope in an individual, leading to health and well-being. Positive thinking skills are influential factors in psychological capital (Yaghobi & Khalilpoor, 2022).

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Psychological capital is a positive psychological state and a realistic and flexible approach to life, consisting of four components: hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. Each of these constructs is considered a positive psychological capacity with a valid measurement scale, based on theory and research, state-dependent, and significantly related to functional outcomes. In fact, the term psychological capital refers to "who you are, your true self," and "who you want to become, your potential self," and goes beyond human capital "what I know" and social capital "who I know". In other words, psychological capital challenges individuals to explore who they are, leading to better self-awareness, which is essential for achieving goals and success (Luthans et al., 2008; F. Luthans et al., 2007; F. L. Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital is a valuable resource that helps individuals deal more effectively with stress and manage their psychological conditions (Sabatini, 2014). Research results have shown that therapeutic-training packages of positive psychotherapy have been effective in increasing aspects of psychological capital including self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022; Kianpour Barjoee et al., 2022; Taherkhani et al., 2023; Yaghobi & Khalilpoor, 2022). In the study by Taherkhani and colleagues (2023) aimed at examining the effect of positive thinking on resilience and life satisfaction in middle-aged people: a randomized controlled trial, it was shown that positive thinking training leads to better thoughts, higher resilience, and more life satisfaction. They also stated that new positive approaches focus on the important role of skills and individual components, including resilience (Taherkhani et al., 2023).

Now, in the third and fourth decades of life, achieving emotional independence is considered more important than physical independence. One of the major tasks of becoming a mature adult is developing the ability to tolerate stresses and disappointments. In middle age, there are physical changes that might affect individuals' previous self-esteem. These physical changes require psychological adjustment and changes in lifestyle and health habits to keep oneself as strong and healthy as possible (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022). Some lifestyle behaviors exist that can be created or modified before the age of sixty-five to help optimize individual functioning. Assessing lifestyle factors can lead to recommendations or interventions for improving cognitive health (Barrett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2023). The study of adult development and growth is unique and specific. However, the results of studies show that positive aging is determined by controllable factors before the age of fifty (Barrett et al., 2018; Saadati et al., 2020). Now that the positive role of positive thinking and, consequently, the role of psychological capital in the quality of human psychological well-being and the resulting performance have been discussed, the fundamental question arises of how and using what models and strategies can one empower the mental treasury of individuals with positive and effective thoughts to enhance their well-being and flourishing in life.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study is a quasi-experimental research with one group receiving training based on the Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills theory and a control group, executed in three stages: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The study population consisted of 40 men and women, aged 25 to 55, who sought counseling at psychological centers in Isfahan. From this population, considering 20 people in each research group, participants were selected through purposive sampling based on inclusion and exclusion criteria and then randomly assigned (via lottery) to the two groups. Inclusion criteria included willingness and consent to participate in the study, no previous participation in positive thinking training courses, not undergoing concurrent psychological or psychiatric treatments, and no acute or chronic psychological or psychiatric disorders. Exit criteria included lack of cooperation, failure to perform tasks assigned in sessions, absence from more than one training session, and use of concurrent counseling. After obtaining the necessary permissions to introduce to the psychological counseling centers in Isfahan and targeted selection of the sample based on the entry and exit criteria, participants were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. A pre-test questionnaire on psychological capital was distributed at this stage. Subsequently, the independent variable (training in Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills and control group without training) was implemented on the experimental group. Then, the post-test and a three-month follow-up were conducted for both groups.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Psychological Capital

The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) was developed by Luthans et al. (2007) to measure individuals' psychological capital, and it was normed among students

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and office workers. This tool consists of 24 items, and participants respond to each item on a six-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Based on the theoretical logic underpinning the PCQ, this instrument comprises four dimensions: self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and optimism, each dimension containing six items. All items of the PCQ are scored directly. Accordingly, in the scoring of this tool, a score of 6 is always used for the option 'strongly agree,' and a score of 1 for 'strongly disagree.' Researchers in several studies have provided evidence supporting the technical characteristics of validity and reliability of the PCQ. In the study by Luthans et al. (2007), the factorial validity of the PCQ supported its four-factor structure (F. Luthans et al., 2007; F. L. Luthans et al., 2007). In the research by Shokri, Mehdavian Mashhadi, and Khodayi (2020), internal consistency coefficients for the sub-scales of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism were 0.87, 0.83, 0.86, and 0.70 respectively, and the overall score for psychological capital was 0.93, 0.79, 0.86, 0.84, and 0.88 (Shokri et al., 2020).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills for Adult

In this study, the training package for Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills for adults was prepared and compiled through a process of reviewing and examining texts in the field of positive psychology, focusing on fundamental concepts and principles related to prevention and health promotion, along with practical concepts of well-being and flourishing. This was done to identify and utilize individual abilities and potential based on the conceptual-process model of Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills for adults for the first time by Chamzadeh Ghanavati (2014). The agreement coefficient of expert judges on this training package was 0.9. Titles of training sessions and brief descriptions of each session are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Training Sessions

Session	Session Title
1	Introduction to participants, presenting the Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills model, and outlining the overall training process
2	Examining the impact of stress on the body and physical health; Teaching the first factor of Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills (Part 1)
3	Teaching the first factor of Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills (Recognition of Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior) (Part 2); Review of the previous session
4	Teaching the second skill (Positive Self-Talk); Review of lessons from the previous session
5	Teaching the third skill (My Role); Assurance and review of learning Positive Self-Talk
6	Teaching the fourth skill (Challenging); Review of the previous session
7	Teaching the fifth skill (Alternation)
8	Final summary and presentation of the framework for the Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills

2.4. Data analysis

The data obtained from the implementation of the research were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance and Bonferroni post-hoc test, utilizing SPSS software.

3. Findings and Results

As observed in Table 2, in the components of psychological capital, the group trained in Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills at the post-test and follow-up stages had higher means compared to the control group at both the post-test and follow-up stages.

Table 2

Descriptive Indices of Research Variables

Variable	Stage	Control Group M (SD)	FFPTS Group M (SD)
Self-Efficacy	Pre-Test	24.5 (3.72)	24.05 (3.75)
	Post-Test	23.45 (5.23)	31 (3.70)
	Follow-Up	22.95 (3.28)	32.75 (3.40)
Hope	Pre-Test	19.80 (5.30)	17.85 (4.36)
	Post-Test	16.85 (5.24)	27.45 (3.01)

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	Follow-Up	15.95 (4.67)	30.25 (3.38)
Resilience	Pre-Test	22.85 (3.47)	19.15 (2.85)
	Post-Test	21.80 (3.15)	30.80 (2.50)
	Follow-Up	20.85 (2.92)	33.05 (1.96)
Optimism	Pre-Test	20.90 (3.58)	19.80 (4.02)
	Post-Test	20.75 (2.59)	26.45 (2.37)
	Follow-Up	20.05 (2.78)	27.70 (3.03)

As shown in Table 3:

For self-efficacy, considering the sphericity assumption (Table 3), in the within-group effect, the factor of time ($F = 110.72$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$) and the interaction of time and group ($F = 197.65$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$) were significant. In the between-group effect, the group factor ($F = 25.87$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that there are significant differences in self-efficacy between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, and between the experimental and control groups.

For hope, given the violation of the sphericity assumption (Table 3), in the within-group effect, the factor of time ($F = 45.80$, $df = 1.53$, $p < 0.01$) and the interaction of time and group ($F = 46.39$, $df = 1.53$, $p < 0.01$) were significant. In the between-group effect, the group factor ($F = 34.67$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$) indicates significant differences in hope between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, and between the experimental and control groups.

For resilience, considering the sphericity assumption (Table 3), in the within-group effect, the factor of time ($F = 199.11$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$) and the interaction of time and group ($F = 330.48$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$) were significant. In the between-group effect, the group factor ($F = 39.38$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$) shows significant differences in resilience between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, and between the experimental and control groups.

For optimism, given the violation of the sphericity assumption (Table 3), in the within-group effect, the factor of time ($F = 52.82$, $df = 1.37$, $p < 0.01$) and the interaction of time and group ($F = 72.49$, $df = 1.37$, $p < 0.01$) were significant. In the between-group effect, the group factor ($F = 23.74$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$) indicates significant differences in optimism between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, and between the experimental and control groups.

Table 3

The Results of Within-Group and Between-Group Tests

Variable	Source of Effect	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared	Power
Self-Efficacy	Within Groups	230.50	2	115.25	110.72	0.01	0.73	1.00
	Time * Group	387.60	2	193.80	197.65	0.01	0.81	1.00
	Between Groups	25.87	1	25.87	25.87	0.01	0.40	0.99
Hope	Within Groups	45.80	1	45.80	45.80	0.01	0.56	1.00
	Time * Group	46.39	1	46.39	46.39	0.01	0.56	1.00
	Between Groups	34.67	1	34.67	34.67	0.01	0.48	0.99
Resilience	Within Groups	199.11	2	99.56	199.11	0.01	0.83	1.00
	Time * Group	330.48	2	165.24	330.48	0.01	0.88	1.00
	Between Groups	39.38	1	39.38	39.38	0.01	0.51	0.99
Optimism	Within Groups	52.82	1	52.82	52.82	0.01	0.57	1.00
	Time * Group	72.49	1	72.49	72.49	0.01	0.63	1.00
	Between Groups	23.74	1	23.74	23.74	0.01	0.44	0.98

As seen in Table 4:

For the self-efficacy variable, the pre-test stage significantly differs from the post-test and follow-up stages ($p < 0.01$), but there is no significant difference between the post-test and follow-up stages ($p > 0.05$). This implies that the training in Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills was effective at the post-test stage, and this effectiveness was sustained until the follow-up stage.

For the hope variable, the pre-test stage significantly differs from the post-test and follow-up stages ($p < 0.01$), and there is also a significant difference between the post-test and follow-up stages ($p > 0.05$). This means that the training in Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills was effective at the post-test stage, and this effectiveness was sustained until the follow-up stage.

For the resilience variable, the pre-test stage significantly differs from the post-test and follow-up stages ($p < 0.01$), but

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there is no significant difference between the post-test and follow-up stages ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that the training in Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills was effective at the post-test stage, and this effectiveness was sustained until the follow-up stage.

For the optimism variable, the pre-test stage significantly differs from the post-test and follow-up stages ($p < 0.01$), but there is no significant difference between the post-test and follow-up stages ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that the training in Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills was effective at the post-test stage, and this effectiveness was sustained until the follow-up stage.

Table 4

The Results of Bonferroni's Post-Hoc Test

Variable	Base Stage	Comparison Stages	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance
Self-Efficacy	Pre-Test	Post-Test	-3.67	0.32	0.001
	Pre-Test	Follow-Up	-4.30	0.34	0.001
	Post-Test	Follow-Up	-0.62	0.30	0.13
Hope	Pre-Test	Post-Test	-3.32	0.40	0.001
	Pre-Test	Follow-Up	-4.27	0.52	0.001
	Post-Test	Follow-Up	-0.95	0.32	0.02
Resilience	Pre-Test	Post-Test	-3.30	0.34	0.001
	Pre-Test	Follow-Up	-5.95	0.37	0.001
	Post-Test	Follow-Up	-0.65	0.29	0.09
Optimism	Pre-Test	Post-Test	-3.52	0.47	0.001
	Pre-Test	Follow-Up	-3.27	0.23	0.70
	Post-Test	Follow-Up	-0.27	0.23	0.70

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a training package based on the Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills (FFPTS) theory on the components of psychological capital in adults. Overall, the results indicated that the training package of FFPTS, encompassing the first factor: cognition of thought, feeling, behavior; the second factor: positive self-talk; the third factor: my role; the fourth factor: challenge; and the fifth factor: substitution, was effective in enhancing psychological capital components in adults, including self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope. To explain the results, it can be stated that generally, when individuals engage as active and self-motivated learners in a new educational environment, their motivation and energy for learning new concepts and applying them to achieve their goals, experience a more satisfying life, and improve personal and interpersonal relationships increase, consequently leading to a stronger return from the training. Humans differ in their use of supportive resources and internal and environmental capabilities. Familiarity with new skills and understanding how to use strategies when faced with challenging events prepares individuals to recognize and utilize resources and opportunities that might have been overlooked or deemed unimportant before the training (Almeida & Ephraim, 2023). They emphasize that positive thinking is a cognitive process focused on optimism towards reality. Therefore, training in concepts and strategies based on skills such as cognition of thought, feeling, behavior, positive self-talk, my role, challenge, and substitution (Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills) inherently contain positive concepts and principles based on the individual's experienced reality. These can play a significant role in enhancing psychological capital components like resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. Training in FFPTS enables individuals to better recognize their abilities and strengths, develop more trust and belief in their capacities and the tasks they can perform, leading to the creation of a belief and thought pattern in the individual that fosters a sense of choice and control over areas they can influence. A greater sense of control over events typically results in less experienced stress. Consequently, with improved mental health against life's pressures, their optimal performance level throughout life can be maintained (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022). The results align with the prior research (Almeida & Ifrim, 2023; Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022; Kianpour Barjoee et al., 2022; Sooreh et al., 2023; Taherkhani et al., 2023), which reported the positive impact of positive thinking skills training on cognitive and behavioral changes. Positive thinking can be accentuated by considering ways of viewing

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events and is a significant source of motivation for individuals to continue their daily lives. Positive thinking training is also considered a form of psychological empowerment training. It includes strategies and approaches that offer efficient, positive cognitive patterns and a dual perspective (considering both possibilities and deficiencies) and results showed that participants, by learning new ways of looking at issues and events, demonstrated their mental readiness for change. When individuals learn positive thinking, they experience a better mood, become more prepared for change, increase their creativity, and are more likely to try various approaches (Sooreh et al., 2023; Taherkhani et al., 2023). This explains why positive thinking enhances individuals' resilience: it firstly increases hope as they adopt a new perspective to utilize their internal and environmental capabilities and, where they cannot change a situation or event, reach acceptance while finding their role and power of choice and control. Subsequently, adaptive behaviors and problem-solving in individuals emerge, and psychological empowerment increases their readiness for change. The results are consistent with the previous studies (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022; Kianpour Barjoee et al., 2022; Sooreh et al., 2023; Taherkhani et al., 2023). The goal of positive psychological interventions is to achieve or be on the path to flourishing and experience a high-quality life. Fortunately, over the past two decades, there has been worldwide attention to positive psychology, and specialists help individuals use their capabilities and enjoy a more satisfying life. Based on extensive research over the years, addressing the positive aspects of life or what makes life valuable, alongside addressing psychological deficiencies, contributes significantly to a holistic view of the human psychological structure and the maintenance of mental health (Chamzadeh Ghanavati et al., 2022; Yaghobi & Khalilpoor, 2022). The Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills for adults are a model based on education and skills that bring elements necessary for learning and change to provide a new perspective. It also involves the practical application of principles and strategies leading to a direct, goal-oriented path for individuals and their long-term self-empowerment.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

One notable limitation of the current study is its relatively small and geographically limited sample size, consisting of participants from psychological counseling centers in Isfahan. This may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Another limitation is the use of self-report measures, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or subjective interpretations of the questions. Additionally, the lack of long-term follow-up beyond three months limits the understanding of the enduring effects of the training. The study also lacked diversity in terms of socioeconomic status and educational backgrounds of the participants, which could influence the applicability of the results to different demographic groups.

Future research could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample that includes participants from various geographical locations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational levels to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Long-term follow-up studies are also recommended to assess the sustained impact of the Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills training over time. Furthermore, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative measures with qualitative interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions of the training. Investigating the effectiveness of the training in different settings, such as workplaces or educational institutions, could also offer valuable information on its adaptability and utility in various contexts.

The implications of this study are significant for psychological practitioners, educators, and counselors. They can incorporate the Five-Factor Positive Thinking Skills training into their practice to enhance psychological capital components such as resilience, hope, and optimism among adults. The training can be particularly beneficial in counseling settings for individuals facing life challenges or seeking personal development. Educational institutions could integrate this training into adult education programs or workshops to foster positive thinking and well-being among students and staff. Additionally, workplace training programs can include these skills to promote a positive work environment and enhance employee well-being and productivity. The findings also suggest the importance of incorporating positive psychology principles more broadly into mental health and well-being initiatives in various community settings.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared 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.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

Mana Chamzadeh Ghanavati contributed to the research design, data collection, and the implementation of the training package based on the theory of five-factor positive thinking skills. Mohsen Golparvar provided expertise in research methodology, data analysis, and interpretation. Hadi Farhadi assisted in data analysis and overall research coordination.

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