



Compilation of psychological security training package for teenagers with mental insecurity

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Background and Aim: Adolescence research is a life stage of an individual's life cycle in which a teenager experiences all-round physical-cognitive-moral and behavioral changes and transformations. This life stage is when changes in the roles and responsibilities of a person occur based on society's expectations of him as an adult. This study was conducted with the aim of developing a special psychological safety training package for adolescents suffering from psychological insecurity. **Methods:** This research was qualitative and content analysis based on the method of Heish and Shannon (2005). The research environment was all the texts related to psychological security and psychological insecurity of adolescents, 17 texts were selected and analyzed based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. **Results:** The results of content analysis showed five main concepts, which were: 1) security based on self-perception and acceptance, 2) spiritual security, 3) perceived moral and legal security, 4) security based on social capacities and 5) communication and family security. **Conclusion:** School counselors and adolescent counselors in behavioral correction centers can use this method to improve the mental health of adolescents.



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Introduction

Adolescence is a stage in the individual life cycle where the adolescent experiences comprehensive physical, cognitive, moral, and behavioral changes and developments. This period is a stage in life where changes in roles and responsibilities occur based on societal expectations of them as adults (Forman & Davies, 2003). Adolescents face issues in various areas of life, including interpersonal relationships, particularly with the opposite sex, and especially in the fields of career and educational choices, leading to them being quick-tempered, indecisive, unstable, worried, and anxious. Some researchers have named this period as the identity-formation stage. Other psychologists have described adolescence as a period of sentimentality and thrill-seeking, a time for experiencing psychological turmoil, and a phase of stress and turmoil (Ghadiri et al., 2015; Taheri et al., 2022).

All adolescents are in search of identity and experience severe anxiety and mental distress during identity crises, stemming from their inability to organize different aspects of their personality into an acceptable and coherent self. This leads to a sense of psychological insecurity in social, educational, occupational performances, ethical and religious values, patterns, etc. (Liu et al., 2021). On the other hand, alongside internal psychological issues stemming from physical and psychological changes of this period, peer pressure, and adverse events in school and family can also lead to increased insecurity and anxiety. The feeling of security is one of the fundamental human needs that begins with the birth of a child and continues in the form of attachment throughout life (Lee et al., 2016). Although primary caregivers play a significant role in forming the initial bases of security, subsequent life experiences can also play a role in strengthening or weakening this sense of security (Marsh et al., 2006; Namni & Bagherian, 2019).

Research shows that 28% of adolescents are involved with mental health issues (Poli et al., 2016). The high level of turmoil and doubts in adolescence, combined with the awakening of sexual energy, is a common experience. However, which adolescents experience more psychological insecurity depends on various factors (Ahmadzadeh Sharifi, 2022). In the

teenage years, as adolescents develop a sense of independence, they prefer less dependence on their families, share their issues less with family members, and sometimes, with limited experience, wish to solve their problems themselves. This situation, combined with expectations from school and family to perform academic duties and daily life tasks, leads to increased anxiety and worry (Bahreini et al., 2020; Shayegh Boroujeni et al., 2019). The inability to resolve issues, alongside peer pressure for new experiences and fear of rejection, can expose adolescents to internal ethical conflicts and interpersonal, legal, and social issues (Peng et al., 2020; Raja et al., 1992; Carlo & Padilla-Walker, 2020). Such unresolved psychological situations endanger the well-being of adolescents, make self-acceptance difficult, and lead to experiences of loneliness. Undoubtedly, each generation of adolescents is influenced by the environmental, social, and political factors of their time (Yousefi et al., 2011). Adolescents who cannot adapt and align with these conditions face more problems during adolescence (Khabbaz Shirazi, Golparvar & Yousefi, 2022).

Various researches have targeted the psychological insecurity of adolescents. For instance, Poli et al. (2016) showed that insecure environments can create psychological insecurity in adolescents; Ching and Wu (2018) demonstrated that parental conflicts could lead to emotional insecurity in adolescents, Mendolarzo et al. (2009) indicated the role of parental acceptance-rejection in emotional instability; Shankar-Krishnan et al. (2021) found a significant relationship between psychological insecurity in adolescents and psychological well-being, poor body image, and eating disorders, and Ramondi et al. (2020) showed that insecure attachment is the basis of psychological insecurity in adolescents.

Given the importance of adolescence in personality development and the future of adolescents' lives, it is necessary to pay preventive and corrective attention to their psychological insecurity. In this context, the lack of a specific educational package for the prevention and correction of psychological insecurity among published research underscores the need to develop a package aimed at reducing the psychological insecurity of adolescents, considering the conditions of

adolescence. Such a package could facilitate experimental research pathways and provide a framework for adolescent counselors to help reduce or prevent the occurrence or exacerbation of psychological insecurity. Therefore, this article addresses the topic: What components constitute a specialized educational package for psychological insecurity?

Method

Given the aim of this research was to develop a package for reducing psychological insecurity specifically for adolescents with such insecurities, this study employed a qualitative approach and content analysis using the conventional method of Hsieh and Shannon (2004). This approach is applicable when there are existing theories and research texts on the subject matter (Salvi, 2019). In this research, the theories were available, and all codes and categories were directly extracted from the texts. To this end, texts related to adolescent psychological insecurity and security were studied based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria.

In the present study, the research environment consisted of texts related to psychological insecurity and security. The selection of texts continued until data saturation occurred, which happened after five to six sources. However, the selection of texts expanded to 17 documents. These texts, ranging from 2006 to 2023, included books, articles, and both domestic and international theses that focused on adolescent psychological insecurity and security. The inclusion criteria were: texts should be primary sources, related to the last 17 years, and must revolve around the primary concepts of psychological insecurity or security. The exclusion criteria were: texts without a reputable publisher and texts related to student theses. It is noteworthy that, according to database searches, no published articles in Persian on the topic were found up to the time of writing this article.

Materials

1. Guideline. For data collection, a guide questionnaire and thorough text study were used; the questionnaire's questions guided the researcher to focus on the concepts of insecurity and security in the relevant texts and to take note of key phrases and important points. Once the sources to be analyzed

were identified, they were studied line by line, underwent content analysis and coding, and were reviewed by the supervising professor and advisor. At this stage, the coherence and consistency of the data in terms of meaning and concept were examined, while also creating clear distinctions between the content. Subsequently, the sources were studied and reviewed thoroughly with the help of supervising professors and advisors, and the emerging themes were revised. It should be noted that data were analyzed simultaneously with their collection, meaning there was a reciprocal interaction between what is known and what needs to be known, and a back-and-forth movement between the data and analysis occurred, essential for achieving validity and reliability (Adler, 2022). In this research, the simultaneous collection and analysis of data and the repeated back-and-forth movement between data and codes were also conducted.

Implementation

In summary, for data analysis, the conventional content analysis method of Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was used, as follows: 1) All conceptual units of the selected texts were extracted; 2) At this stage, the texts were studied line by line, and the conceptual units were initially coded; 3) To check the consistency of the codings and categorizations with the texts, the extracted concepts were preliminarily reviewed by the supervising professor and advisor; 4) The credibility and reliability of the codings were performed by all research team members, except the student (experts). This involved paragraphs extracted from the texts, along with their codings, being reviewed by the supervising professors, advisor, and a qualitative analysis expert. In the final stage, 5) Conclusions were drawn based on the codings and categorizations, validated by the supervising professors, advisor, and qualitative expert. It should be noted that this approach is applicable when there are existing theories and research texts on the subject matter (Salvi, 2019), and all codes and categories are directly extracted from the texts. Finally, alignment with psychological security education was conducted by the supervising professor and his colleagues in this field.

Results

Table 1 shows the first, second, and third stages of the analysis according to the method of Hsieh and Shannon (2005).

Table 1: Coding of Texts Related to Psychological Enhancement

Primary Coding	Sub-Concepts	Main Theme
Conversing with parents about everyday events	Encouragement to express feelings and dialogue	Security based on family functioning
Seeking their support for difficult and challenging situations		
Showing love and affection to parents		
Helping with household chores	Spending time with family	
Suggesting and organizing plans for family gatherings		
Suggesting and organizing plans for outdoor recreational activities		
Listening to advice despite the difficulty of hearing it	Receptiveness to advice	
Understanding that parents are not ill-wishers of their children		
Accepting that no human is perfect, including parents	Acceptance of parents with all their virtues and flaws	
Accepting that parents do not plan to harm or annoy their child		
Who am I?	Familiarity with levels of identity	Security based on acceptance and self
What am I doing?		
What do I have?		
Understanding that part of identity is inherent and not necessarily the best way to connect with the world	Planning for a new identity	
Recognizing one's own positive and negative characteristics from self and others' perspectives		
Decision-making for a new identity by reflecting on the past		
Evaluating and recognizing values		
Clarifying goals and plans to achieve them		
Identifying limitations		
Learning to respect others	Familiarity with topics that facilitate living with others	Security based on adherence to rules and ethics
Learning the importance of family		
Teaching honesty		
Cultivating a love for learning		
Teaching religious respect		
Teaching principles of adaptation and compromise with life		
Teaching avoidance of bullying	Teaching topics harmful to living with others	
Teaching avoidance of laziness and irresponsibility		
Controlling negative emotions towards others, such as jealousy	Managing behaviors harmful to social support attraction	
Security based on social capacities		
Controlling negative attitudes and deceit		
Avoiding blaming others for problems		
Caring for each other	Engaging in behaviors that help attract support from others	
Respect and understanding each other and honest communication		
Solving issues jointly		
Discussing some secrets and goals with each other		
Forgiving oneself	Overcoming obstacles to finding meaning	Security based on spirituality
Forgiving others		
Refraining from judging others		
Judging correct from incorrect behaviors		
Understanding the purposefulness of life	Laying the groundwork for finding meaning	
Responding to questions related to meaning		

Familiarity with the capacity of religion for providing peace
Familiarity with moral virtues and their benefits in finding meaning

For the preparation of the educational package, the context-based instructional design model by Milkova (2012) was utilized. This approach was adopted after the qualitative section results revealed the concepts and sub-concepts that illustrate how to assist adolescents in achieving psychological security. Also, based on the texts from the sample section, it was accepted that adolescents might experience psychological insecurity for various reasons; therefore, it was presumed that they need training in improving psychological security so that this crucial life stage can be associated with minimal regret and maximum achievement. Accordingly, and based on the axes extracted from the qualitative

section, the trainings were designed in five dimensions and eight sessions: Milkova's model (2012) encompasses three important stages in educational program design, which are: (1) providing behavioral definitions; then (2) based on the extracted main concepts, general objectives were prepared, (3) in the next stage, sub-objectives and techniques were presented in the form of training sessions related to each goal. It should be noted that techniques were used to achieve the necessary skills for the objectives of each session from four significant, reputable, and documented sources for designing strategies and techniques.

Table 2. Summary of Developed Sessions

Sessions	Summary of Eight Sessions of the Adolescent Psychological Security Educational Package
First	Familiarization of group members with each other and with the group instructor, establishing a therapeutic relationship, defining group goals and rules, understanding the benefits, obstacles, and influential factors of psychological security.
Second	Becoming acquainted with ways to improve self-awareness, the art of recognizing strengths and weaknesses through reflection on the past, contemplating the present and receiving feedback from others, how to achieve self-acceptance by understanding oneself and enhancing self-esteem, and introduction and practice of some techniques for this.
Third	Familiarization with the three dimensions of identity finding: who am I, what do I have, what am I doing, what do I want, acquaintance with values and techniques for determining values, improving responsibility.
Fourth	Learning about family-friendliness and its role in psychological security, how to cope with family problems and problem-focused strategies, acceptance of parents and spending time with family, teaching altruism.
Fifth	Defining the role of spiritual values and spiritual goals in psychological security and coping with psychological pain and suffering, performing exercises in meaning-finding and understanding the role of meaning in preventing risky behaviors.
Sixth	Understanding the importance of social support in getting through stormy days, teaching problem-solving skills in interpersonal communication, enhancing individual's ability in conflict management, strengthening the ability to be solution-focused in interpersonal relationships, and improving social skills.
Seventh	Teaching adaptive methods for regulating negative emotions destructive to relationships and daily life with the help of problem-solving, and improving communication skills for controlling peer pressure.
Eighth	Awareness of the role of ethics and respect for rules in improving communication, attracting social support, acquaintance and practice of ethical virtues as a way to achieve lasting happiness.

Conclusion

This research was conducted with the objective of developing an educational package for psychological security specifically for adolescents with psychological insecurity. Initially, to explore the integrated components of psychological security for adolescents, a content analysis based on the method of Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was conducted. The analysis revealed five themes: 1) Security based on self-perception and acceptance, 2) Spiritual security, 3) Perceived ethical and legal security,

4) Security based on social capacities, and 5) Communication and family-based security. In explaining the theme of security based on self-perception and acceptance, it can be said that since one of the important issues in individual psychological, social, and family life is the ability and power to face daily tasks, everyday events, and unusual and crisis situations, self-acceptance helps the adolescent recognize their weaknesses and strengths and understand their worth, accept themselves in various life aspects, and significantly frees them from internal

conflicts that could arise from a bitter past, aiding in identity formation and self-belief development. In this context, there have been studies that confirm self-acceptance can play a significant role in adolescents' psychological security, including those with psychological insecurity. For example, Polina Pokalat and colleagues (2021) showed that lack of self-acceptance is associated with self-harming behaviors; Garcia (2012) demonstrated that self-acceptance is significantly related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being in adolescents; Koko Kiyohan and colleagues (2017) found that unconditional self-acceptance is significantly related to depression; Islam and colleagues (2014) showed the relationship between self-acceptance and academic achievement.

Another concept extracted from the qualitative data was the feeling of spiritual security, highlighting that adolescents need to live purposefully and meaningfully to achieve psychological security. Meaning and goals in everyday life and during difficult days, especially in crisis events, help adolescents continue to survive, be resilient, and enhance their learning. Furthermore, meaning helps them not lose their way within the family and society, including school, clarify their values, and confront life issues properly to safely navigate through the crises and difficult transitions of adolescence and peer pressure. This finding is in line with other researchers' findings that demonstrate the power of meaning and purpose in adolescent growth, such as those by Damon and colleagues (2019) showing the significant role of purpose and meaning in adolescent development; Yigar and Bandik (2009) pointed out the role of purpose and meaning in life and academic progress; Rati and Rustegi (2007) also mentioned the role of meaning and purpose in adolescent well-being.

Another extracted concept was ethical and legal security, derived from qualitative analysis, indicating that for an adolescent to have psychological security, they need to accept ethical and legal structures. This acceptance helps the adolescent more easily adapt to social environments like family, school, and community, be accepted by others, especially authorities, make appropriate decisions against peer pressure for risky behaviors, and be more successful in daily tasks. In general, ethics and

law provide a better judgment framework for adolescents. This finding aligns with research by Fatima and colleagues (2020) and Carlo and Padilla-Walker (2020) on the role of moral development in shaping social behaviors and Alhadabi and colleagues (2019) on the role of moral intelligence in academic self-efficacy and learning motivation.

Another concept derived from qualitative data was security based on social capacities, indicating that an adolescent can achieve psychological security when able to utilize social capacities. These capacities relate to the social environments in which the adolescent is involved, including teachers, school environments, societal peace, feeling altruism from society, and perceiving support from friends, peers, school authorities, and family. Such environments not only prevent insecurity but also provide social support. This context can create an attitude in adolescents that they can make the most of social capacities. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies, such as Key and colleagues (2022) showing that social support reduces symptoms of internal and external disorders among adolescents; Karaer and Akdemir (2019) showed the relationship between social support and emotional regulation; Wang and colleagues (2022) demonstrated that social support can reduce the adverse effects of childhood maltreatment.

The last concept derived from qualitative data was security based on communication and family relationships, showing that an adolescent's interactions with peers, family, and interpersonal relationships play a significant role in creating psychological security. It points to the need for a calm environment; a safe environment; conflict management; positive interaction; family justice; supportive relationships; a respectful atmosphere; a culture of cooperation; clear boundaries; delegation of responsibility; emotional support; and appropriate parenting. This finding is consistent with those of other researchers who have shown the effects of family and family communication, such as Karaer, Akdemir (2020) on the role of family in adolescent emotional regulation, Perezfantz and colleagues (2019) on the role of family function in reducing risky behaviors, and Shek and colleagues (2019) on the influence of family communication trends on internet addiction among adolescents.

Based on the findings extracted from the qualitative section, the educational package included five main axes for which training and counseling sessions were prepared: 1) Security based on improving communication with the family (improving responsibility, controlling negative emotions, improving moral virtues, self-restraint, improving communication skills), 2) Security based on self-awareness and identity finding (determining values and responsibility regarding life tasks and goals, resistance to peer pressure), 3) Security based on spirituality (defining spiritual goals and planning for them), 4) Security based on moral growth (improving moral virtues, self-restraint); 5) Security based on leveraging social capacities (attracting various social supports, improving communication skills). The objectives and content of the training were developed in eight sessions. The package development process was based on Milkova's (2012) context-based approach. The axes, strategies, and techniques of the sessions were developed through repeated discussions and conversations between the supervising professor, advisor, and student. The package evaluation results affirmed the content's validity.

Explaining these results, the reason can be attributed to the precise development process and the achievement of this package, the primary content of qualitative research content analysis, and the package development process from Milkova's (2012) method, and its content resulted from repeated expert sessions and following a step-by-step method. The combination of these factors has helped this package to have content validity. It should be noted that this package has also been tested in training, and its implementation validity has also been confirmed, and its results are beyond the scope of this article.

Like other research, this study has limitations, which are implicitly suggested in the form of a research proposal, including that this package needs to be implemented among different adolescent communities to further examine its validity. Also, school counselors and adolescent counselors in behavioral correction centers are requested to use this method to improve adolescent mental health.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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