

The Effectiveness of Group-Based Positive Youth Development Training on Attachment to Parents and Alexithymia in Male Adolescents with a Tendency Toward Addiction in Isfahan

Manije. Ghazi¹, Mohammad. Ghasemi Pirbalouti^{1*}, Fariba. Kiani²

¹ Department of Psychology, Shk.C., Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord, Iran

² Department of Psychology, Bor.C., Islamic Azad University, Boroujen, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: Mgh@iau.ac.ir

Editor

Ahmad Amani
Associate Professor, Counseling
Department, University of
Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran
a.amani@uok.ac.ir

Reviewers

Reviewer 1: Mohammad Salehi
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Management, Sari Branch, Islamic
Azad University, Sari, Iran. Email: drsalehi@iausari.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Kamdin Parsakia
Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond
Hill, Ontario, Canada. Email: kamdinarsakia@kmanresce.ca

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the introduction, the paragraph beginning with “Adolescence is one of the most complex and sensitive stages of human development” provides a useful developmental background, but it remains too general before moving to addiction tendency. The authors should strengthen the transition from normative adolescent development to addiction vulnerability by explaining why adolescents with addiction tendency specifically require intervention targeting attachment and alexithymia. At present, the introduction describes adolescence broadly but does not sufficiently justify why these two dependent variables were selected over other psychological outcomes.

In the paragraph discussing substance use among adolescents, the manuscript states that “any substance use, even experimental use, exposes adolescents to short-term problems.” This statement is important, but it should be supported by more precise epidemiological and developmental evidence. The authors should distinguish between “substance use,” “substance abuse,” “addiction tendency,” and “addiction,” because these constructs are not interchangeable. In the present study, participants were adolescents with a tendency toward addiction, not adolescents clinically diagnosed with substance use disorder; therefore, the terminology should be revised carefully throughout the text.

In the paragraph beginning with “Studies have pointed to various factors in addiction tendency among adolescents,” the role of peers is discussed extensively, but the study’s outcome variable is attachment to parents, particularly attachment to mother and father. The manuscript should more clearly explain the theoretical pathway linking peer influence, weakened parental attachment, addiction tendency, and the expected role of Positive Youth Development training. Without this clarification, the argument appears to shift between peer attachment and parental attachment without a coherent conceptual model.

In the inclusion criteria paragraph, the manuscript states that the absence of acute or chronic psychiatric disorders was confirmed by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist and recorded in the school health file. This is a strong criterion, but the authors should specify whether all participants were formally screened by a professional for this study or whether the researchers relied only on existing school records. This distinction is important for methodological transparency and for evaluating the internal validity of the sample selection process.

In the instruments section, the manuscript introduces the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment but states that it contains 24 items in two dimensions, attachment to parents and attachment to peers, and then reports secure and insecure attachment to parents and peers. However, the findings are reported separately for attachment to mother and attachment to father. The authors must explain how mother and father attachment scores were derived from the instrument. If a modified or shortened version was used, the authors should describe its structure, scoring, and psychometric evidence in detail.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the section on attachment, the manuscript states that “according to attachment theories, parents, and specifically the primary caregiver, namely the mother, play an important role in shaping the child’s personality.” This statement should be updated and nuanced because contemporary attachment theory recognizes the role of multiple attachment figures, including fathers, while still acknowledging the frequent centrality of the primary caregiver. Since one of the findings is that attachment to mother improved but attachment to father did not, the theoretical framework should include a more balanced discussion of maternal and paternal attachment before the results are presented.

In the paragraph defining alexithymia, the manuscript describes alexithymia as “a personality trait” and also refers to it as a “disorder.” This creates a conceptual problem. Alexithymia is generally treated as a psychological construct or trait-like difficulty in identifying and describing emotions, not necessarily a formal psychiatric disorder. The authors should revise the terminology and consistently describe alexithymia as a difficulty or deficit in emotional awareness and expression, unless they provide a diagnostic framework supporting the term “disorder.”

In the introduction, several intervention studies are listed consecutively, such as transdiagnostic treatment, self-care training, dialectical behavior therapy, school-based addiction prevention, compassion-based therapy, and positive-thinking training. This paragraph reads as a catalog of previous studies rather than an integrated literature review. The authors should synthesize these studies around common mechanisms such as self-control, emotional regulation, distress tolerance, and risk prevention, and then explain how Positive Youth Development differs from or extends these approaches.

In the paragraph introducing Positive Youth Development, the manuscript states that the approach “moves away from the view that adolescents are problematic and in need of correction.” This is a strong conceptual point, but the authors should connect it more directly to the intervention protocol used in this study. For example, the introduction should clarify how the program sessions on socialization, empathy, communication, self-regulation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy are expected to improve attachment to parents and reduce alexithymia. This would strengthen the causal logic of the study.

In the final paragraph of the introduction, the research question asks whether Positive Youth Development training affects “attachment to peers and alexithymia,” while the title and results refer to “attachment to parents,” “attachment to mother,” and “attachment to father.” This is a serious inconsistency that must be corrected before publication. The final research question should exactly match the analyzed dependent variables. If the study analyzed attachment to mother, attachment to father, and alexithymia, the question should be rewritten accordingly.

In the method section, the opening sentence contains repetition: “This study was conducted with the aim of the effectiveness of the effectiveness of group-based Positive Youth Development training...” This sentence should be grammatically revised and scientifically simplified. A clearer version would be: “This quasi-experimental study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of group-based Positive Youth Development training on attachment to parents and alexithymia among male adolescents with a tendency toward addiction in Isfahan.”

In the sampling paragraph, the manuscript states that “30 male lower-secondary students with addiction tendency were selected (15 participants for each of the three research groups).” This is mathematically and methodologically incorrect because the study includes two groups, not three groups. The authors should revise this sentence to “15 participants in each of the two groups.” Such errors can reduce confidence in the accuracy of the design description and should be corrected throughout the manuscript.

In the participant selection procedure, the manuscript reports that students scoring one standard deviation above the mean on the Addiction Tendency Questionnaire were selected, and it also mentions “score 50” as the criterion. The authors should clarify whether 50 is the mean, the cutoff score, or the score corresponding to one standard deviation above the mean. The exact scoring range, interpretation, validity, and reliability of the Addiction Tendency Questionnaire should also be reported because this instrument was central to participant screening.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.