



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTING SKILLS TRAINING ON PERCEIVED STRESS AND ADDICTION TENDENCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN TABRIZ CITY

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of parenting skills training on perceived stress and addiction tendency among adolescents in Tabriz city. The statistical population comprised all parents of female secondary school students (second stage) in District 3 of Tabriz, totaling 15,452 individuals. The sample included 30 parents of at-risk female secondary school students from the same district, divided equally into an experimental group (15 parents) and a control group (15 parents), selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen et al. (1986), the Addiction Readiness Questionnaire by Weed and Butcher (1992), and a parenting skills training program. The data were analyzed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The results demonstrated that parenting skills training significantly reduced perceived stress among adolescents in Tabriz. Additionally, the training had a significant impact on decreasing adolescents' tendency toward addiction ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Parenting skills, perceived stress, addiction tendency.

INTRODUCTION

The family serves as the primary environment for a child's upbringing and plays a crucial role in shaping their understanding of human relationships. A child's emotional development and mental well-being largely depend on the family environment. As the first and most influential social unit, family education is fundamental for an individual's growth. Adolescence is a significant phase in personality development (Hauer et al., 2020), marking the transition from childhood to adulthood beginning with sexual maturity. Earlier biologically focused theories viewed adolescence as a period of turmoil and stress (Bamrind, 1991). During this stage,

adolescents often experience intense worry and anxiety, which can hinder their ability to integrate and accept various facets of their personality. They frequently encounter doubts and uncertainties about their surroundings and may sometimes resist others, including their parents, in pursuit of their own goals and desires. The causes of psychological disturbances and the resulting tendency toward addiction in adolescents are varied. For instance, significant changes in life and family dynamics can disrupt a child's familiar world, leading to confusion and anxiety (Azizi, 2002). Additionally, the physical changes experienced during adolescence are a major source of stress. From a developmental psychology standpoint, the biological transformations triggered by hormonal changes create challenges that affect all aspects of an individual's being. Moreover, parental instability, marital conflicts, separation, and neglect by parents can severely harm children and adolescents (Qaemi Amiri, 2009). These factors, whether individually or combined, may push adolescents toward a risky path of addiction. This underscores the importance of focusing on the family's internal structure and parenting styles (Bakhtiari & Baluchi, 2021). Addiction is defined as a dependence on substances, where repeated use in specific amounts and at certain times becomes necessary from the user's perspective, leading to both physical and psychological reliance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Unfortunately, substance use is quite common among adolescents, causing many families to experience significant problems and harm related to addiction. The adolescence period is the most critical time for the initiation of substance use. This stage marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and involves the formation of personal and social identity. During adolescence, the desire for independence and opposition to parental authority intensifies. In an effort to assert their maturity and individuality, adolescents often question family values and attempt to establish their own. These factors, combined with natural curiosity and a need for activity, novelty, and excitement, increase adolescents' vulnerability to substance use. Therefore, to effectively prevent and treat addiction among adolescents, it is essential first to explore the underlying causes of their tendency toward drug use and analyze the factors influencing these behaviors (Azizi, 2002). Perceived stress appears to be a significant factor influencing adolescents' tendency toward addiction.

A review of existing research reveals that, although the concept of perceived stress is widely used across the humanities, medicine, and psychiatry, there is no universally agreed-upon definition. Some researchers view perceived stress as a stimulus—an external force imposed on the individual that leads to physical and psychological discomfort. Another perspective defines perceived stress as a response, focusing on how individuals react to stressors. The third approach centers on an individual's perception, attributing perceived stress to a complex interplay of factors such as stimuli, responses, personal traits, appraisals, and coping strategies. According to this view, situations are not inherently stressful; rather, stress arises when there is an imbalance between the demands of the environment and the individual's assessment of their ability to meet those demands. In other words, stress occurs only when a person feels unable to cope with environmental pressures—a mismatch between external challenges and their capacity to respond (Kheirandish, 2004). Given the highly stimulating and often challenging conditions faced by adolescents today, a variety of factors, including perceived stress, can either increase or decrease their risk of developing an addiction, with perceived stress being among the most critical (Carmona et al., 2020). Statistical research on juvenile delinquency presents concerning data. For example, a study conducted in California found that 80% of juvenile offenders came from families experiencing instability or parental separation (Qaemi, 2009). Additionally, the stress caused by juggling multiple responsibilities—such as attending various classes and learning several skills simultaneously—can disrupt adolescents' focus and place considerable pressure on them. Given the complex and challenging nature of adolescence, the factors contributing to teenagers' tendency toward drug use are diverse, with studies reporting a high prevalence of this tendency in this age group (Azizi, 2002).

It is well established that parenting skills training has a significant impact on children's development, particularly during adolescence (Bakhtiari & Baluchi, 2021). In a study by Beghaei and Azimi (2021), the effectiveness of parenting skills training on stress management

and self-concept among adolescents in Isfahan was examined during the 2020–2021 academic year. This research focused on adolescents under the Education Department of District Four in Isfahan. The findings demonstrated that parenting skills training effectively reduces stress levels and enhances self-concept in adolescents.

Adolescence is a distinctive developmental stage that marks the transition from childhood to youth and adulthood, often accompanied by experiences such as living away from home for the first time (Firoozi, 2012). It is well established that the family environment and parenting practices play a crucial role in the psychosocial development of children (Shoksmith, 1995). Recent research highlights that parenting interventions can significantly influence the thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of children and adolescents (Andris, 2020; Darling, 2019; Holstein, 2020). One effective psychological intervention is parenting skills training, which educates parents about various parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive-neglectful—thereby increasing their awareness and enabling them to adopt the most suitable approach to foster social growth and competence in their adolescents. The study then proceeds with the presentation of its hypotheses.

Research Hypotheses

1. Training in parenting skills has an effect on the perceived stress of adolescents in the city of Tabriz.
2. Training in parenting skills has an effect on the tendency toward addiction among adolescents in the city of Tabriz.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study used a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest format and a control group. According to the research objectives, the statistical population consisted of all parents (both fathers and mothers) of female secondary school students in District 3 of Tabriz, totaling 15,452 individuals. The sample included 30 parents (15 in the experimental group and 15 in the control group) of female secondary school students at risk in District 3 of Tabriz, who were selected through purposive sampling. To increase the reliability of the study, participants were randomly assigned to groups.

The inclusion criteria were:

- a) Willingness to participate in the study;
- b) Borderline scores on both the addiction tendency and perceived stress questionnaires;
- c) Mental health and no medication use.

The exclusion criteria were:

- a) Participation in other simultaneous interventions;
- b) Desire to withdraw from the study.

Data Collection Instruments:

Perceived Stress Questionnaire

The Perceived Stress Questionnaire was originally developed by Cohen and colleagues (1986) and later translated into Persian by Mohammadi (2006). This instrument measures individuals' perceptions of their lives over the past month in terms of unpredictability, uncontrollability, and overload. It consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = Never, 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Very Often), with items 4, 5, 7, and 8 scored in reverse.

Cohen et al. (1983) evaluated the questionnaire's psychometric properties and reported good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78. Similarly, Klein (2000) found the internal consistency of this version to be satisfactory.

Addiction Readiness Questionnaire (Weed & Butcher, 1992)

The Addiction Readiness Scale was developed by Weed and Butcher (1992), and efforts have been made to validate it in Iran. The Iranian Addiction Readiness Questionnaire, designed by Zargar, Najarian, and Naami (2008) based on the psychosocial conditions of Iranian society, consists of two factors and includes 36 items plus 5 lie detector items. Each question is scored on a scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 3 (completely agree), with reverse scoring applied to items 6, 12, 15, and 21. The lie detector factor includes items 12, 13, 15, 21, and 33. The total score of the questionnaire is obtained by summing the scores of all items except the lie detector scale, ranging from 1 to 108; higher scores indicate greater readiness for addiction, and vice versa. This questionnaire combines two factors: active readiness, related to antisocial behaviors, substance use desire, positive attitudes toward substances, depression, and sensation seeking; and passive readiness, which mostly involves lack of assertiveness and depression. In the study by Zargar, Najarian, and Naami (2008), the validity of the scale was assessed by two methods: discriminant validity showed the questionnaire could effectively distinguish between addicted and non-addicted groups, and construct validity was confirmed by correlating it with the 25-item version of the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90), showing significant results. The reliability of the scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value of 0.91, indicating good internal consistency (Zargar, Najarian, & Naami, 2008).

Parenting Skills Training Package

The group-based parenting training was held over eight sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, conducted in a group format while adhering to health protocols. Throughout these sessions, five key parenting skills were taught. The data gathered from this study were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. First, descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data. Subsequently, inferential statistical methods, specifically univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), were applied to test the study's hypotheses.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter Four of this study is organized into two main sections. The first section focuses on describing the statistical sample and the raw data obtained from the research variables. Here, participants' data are summarized and presented using descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution tables (frequency and percentage), as well as measures such as the mean and standard deviation. The second section presents the testing of the research hypotheses and the corresponding findings. In this part, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to evaluate the research hypotheses.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pretest Scores for Perceived Stress and Addiction
Tendency in Adolescents**

Group	Scores	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental Group	Pretest Scores of Perceived Stress	15	19	34	26.34	2.38

	Pretest Scores of Addiction Tendency	15	48	89	68.56	1.16
Control Group	Pretest Scores of Perceived Stress	15	17	32	24.50	2.45
	Pretest Scores of Addiction Tendency	15	53	92	72.41	1.37

In table 1, Shows the mean scores of the pretest for perceived stress and addiction tendency in adolescents in the experimental (trained) group and the control group.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the posttest scores for perceived stress and addiction tendency in adolescents.

Group	Scores	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental Group	Pretest Scores of Perceived Stress	15	9	22	15.61	2.15
	Pretest Scores of Addiction Tendency	15	24	57	40.38	1.64
Control Group	Pretest Scores of Perceived Stress	15	18	33	25.48	2.93
	Pretest Scores of Addiction Tendency	15	48	87	67.20	1.07

In table 2, Shows the mean scores of the posttest for perceived stress and addiction tendency in adolescents in the experimental (trained) group and the control group.

Hypothesis 1: Parenting skills training has a significant effect on perceived stress in adolescents of Tabriz city.

Before testing the research hypotheses, the assumptions of covariance analysis were examined, including the normality of variable distribution, homogeneity of regression slopes, and homogeneity of variances. All assumptions were met for the variables perceived stress and addiction tendency.

Table 3: Results of the covariance analysis (ANCOVA) of the posttest scores for the variable perceived stress after adjusting for the pretest.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F Value	Significance Level	Eta Squared
Pretest	234.737	1	24.373	1.413	0.242	0.037
Group	4991.287	1	4991.287	289.383	0.001	0.887

Error	638.177	27	17.248			
Total	32615	30				

In table 3, The results of the covariance analysis (ANCOVA) on the posttest scores of adolescents perceived stress variable are presented. According to the table results ($F = 289.383$, $df = 1$ and 27 , $p = 0.001$), when the effect of the pretest scores is controlled, the difference between the groups in the posttest scores is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, it can be concluded that parenting skills training has a significant effect on the perceived stress of adolescents in Tabriz city. Furthermore, the eta squared value indicates that 88% of the variance in the posttest scores of perceived stresses in the experimental group (who received parenting skills training) is attributable to the independent variable (parenting skills training).

Hypothesis 2: Parenting skills training has a significant effect on the addiction tendency of adolescents in Tabriz city.

Table 4: Results of the covariance analysis (ANCOVA) on the posttest scores of the addiction tendency variable after adjusting for the pretest.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F Value	Significance Level	Eta Squared
Pretest	22.647	1	22.647	2.287	0.167	0.043
Group	5127.715	1	5127.715	260.294	0.001	0.821
Error	597.624	27	16.384			
Total	30841	30				

In Table 4, the results of the covariance analysis (ANCOVA) on the posttest scores of the adolescents' addiction tendency variable are presented. According to the table ($F = 260.294$, $df = 1$ and 27 , $p = 0.001$), when the effect of the pretest scores is controlled, the difference between the groups in the posttest scores is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, it can be concluded that parenting skills training has a significant effect on the addiction tendency of adolescents in the city of Tabriz. Moreover, the eta squared value indicates that 82% of the variance in the posttest scores of addiction tendency in the experimental group (who received parenting skills training) is attributable to the independent variable (parenting skills training).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first finding of this study indicates that parenting skills training has a significant impact on the perceived stress levels of adolescents in Tabriz. These results are consistent with the findings of Baghaei and Azimi (2021), Mohammadi Ahmadabad and Golestannezhad (2020), Fathi et al. (2019), Mohammadzadeh and Soleimani (2018), Abbasi (2017), and Farda (2021). This finding can be explained by the fact that psychologists, based on numerous studies, have concluded that an ideal family environment fosters emotional security, self-worth, a sense of belonging, and feelings of love and care. In such families, individuals are more likely to develop independence and a sense of responsibility, and children tend to exhibit better adjustment (Navabinejad, 1998). Similarly, researchers such as Modern and Thomas (2001) have shown that the family environment plays a crucial role in influencing delinquent behavior.

Baumrind (as cited in Khoeinajad, 2007) categorized parenting styles into authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive types. According to Baumrind's theory, parenting styles can play both supportive and non-supportive roles, and each style produces different outcomes in a child's development. She explains that authoritarian parents tend to maintain emotionally distant relationships while exerting high levels of control. These parents often resort to punishment without offering explanations and may belittle their children. In contrast, authoritative parents combine firm control with warmth and responsiveness. They explain the reasons behind their disciplinary methods and use positive reinforcement to guide behavior (Baumrind, as cited in Khoeinajad, 2007). Baumrind also describes permissive parents as those who place minimal demands on their children and avoid exerting control. As a result, children raised by permissive parents tend to have the lowest levels of self-confidence, curiosity, and self-regulation. They often struggle with impulse control and have difficulty distinguishing values from non-values. On the other hand, children of authoritative parents typically demonstrate greater autonomy and higher levels of social competence than their peers (Diesland, as cited in Asgari et al., 2012).

The second finding of the present study showed that parenting skills training is effective in reducing adolescents' tendency toward addiction in the city of Tabriz. The results of this study align with those of Mohammadzadeh and Soleimani (2018), Hakimi and Khosravi (2016), Asgari et al. (2012), Farda (2021), Holt and Spilag (2018), and Springer, Parsell, Bamler, and Rose (2016).

Due to the ambiguous and challenging nature of adolescence, the reasons behind adolescents' tendency toward substance use are varied, and the prevalence of this behavior among this age group is reported to be high. Today, addiction stands as one of Iran's most significant social problems, affecting millions of adolescents and young adults—who represent the future of the nation. Adolescents, characterized by their dynamism and curiosity, are particularly vulnerable during this transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, as they navigate numerous developmental challenges (Leshner, 2020). This finding can be explained by recognizing that substance abuse is one of the most critical health issues facing adolescents. Recent research highlights the growing severity of substance use in Iran (Hakimi & Khosravi, 2016). A range of factors—including financial hardship, family dysfunction, marital discord, the presence of negative role models, and unemployment—contribute to the risk of addiction. The theoretical framework of this study underscores both individual and social factors as key drivers of substance abuse.

Another explanation relates to the connection between stress and addiction. Experts such as Hornai argue that individuals under stress may consciously and deliberately engage in high-risk behaviors—such as drug use or alcohol consumption—as a way to reduce, manage, or escape their stress. Research by Schilder and Block has identified depression and mood fluctuations as significant factors influencing susceptibility to addiction. Similarly, Koops and colleagues reported a strong correlation between academic failure and a tendency toward addiction, with a correlation coefficient of 0.53. Furthermore, studies by Bassett indicate that forming relationships and socializing with addicted individuals significantly increases the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors and substance use (Mohammadzadeh, 2018). According to research conducted in California, 80% of offenders came from families characterized by instability and parental separation (Ghaemi, 2009). Additionally, stress resulting from overloaded schedules—such as attending multiple classes or learning several skills simultaneously—can overwhelm children and adolescents, impair their concentration, and subject them to excessive pressure.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research were as follows: Due to time constraints, the follow-up phase was not conducted. Data were collected using self-reporting methods, which may have introduced bias. The educational level of the participants was another limitation of this study.

Additionally, the age range of the sample was considered an important limitation.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. It is recommended that the Education Department implement a program to teach life skills throughout the academic year for adolescents so that they can acquire the necessary skills to reduce perceived stress and tendency toward addiction.
2. Since adolescents are exposed to stressful life events and a tendency toward addiction, it is suggested that the Education Department establish programs to further empower adolescents regarding social harms and self-care methods.
3. It is recommended that schools take necessary measures to raise awareness about the harms of addiction tendency and stress management skills among students through organizing educational courses.

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