The Effect of the Story Telling Group Therapy with Role Play on Social Skills of Preschool Children

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Abstract
Story telling as an instrument may improve social skills in children who have difficulty identifying and expressing their feelings. The present study aimed to investigate the effect of group Story telling therapy accompanying its role on the social skills of preschool children. Experimental method, pretest-posttest design and a control group were the basis of this research. The statistical population consisted of all the 5-6 years old children (i.e. 6100 child) who were studying in preschool centers of Rasht in the academic year of 2012-2013. Among these 6100 children, 30 of them were selected based on cluster sampling and were randomly put in one of the control or experimental groups. First the teacher version of Terakat questionnaire was used as the initial measure. Then narrative therapy was performed in the experimental group for 12 sessions (1 month) and 60 minutes per session. The posttest independent variable was performed in both groups of control and experimental. The data analysis was done based on the Mancova method and SPSS software. Findings indicated a significant difference between posttest scores obtained from the experimental group and control group in terms of improving social skills of preschool children. The results indicated that group narrative therapy accompanying its role on social skills of preschool children was influential up to 95%.

INTRODUCTION
Sociability or socialization is the most important process in order to obtain social skills at house, school and society. The essential element in developing the quality and quantity of educational programs at house, kindergarten, school and educational centers is paying attention to the comprehensive growth of people, specifically their social growth (Metson, 1988). Considering children’s potential and specific needs, a therapist profit from a child every day activities such as games and painting in order to establish an influential relationship and intervention. Therefore utilizing indirect methods such as game and story is considered a necessity in training skills. As the morals and mottos in stories are quite comprehensible for children, the probability of applying and generalizing them by a child in similar contexts would be increased (Otou, ctd in Heffner, 2003). A child usually identifies himself/herself as the story character and improves his/her problem solving skill through representing hypotheses and solutions in order to solve challenges the character of story faces. (Asghari Nekah, 2003). Numerous researches have been done about the efficiency and effectiveness: story telling therapy in children. In a study done by Mojigian (2012) the effectiveness of: story telling therapy on improvement of preschool children’s social skills was investigated which reported a significant decrease in terms of social insufficiency and lack of narrative skill during their social skills training. Mahmoudi (2012) considered a role of story telling -centered education as a beneficiary method in improving children’s social skills and solving externalized issues. Asghari Nekah (2012) believed that doll game therapy can decrease behavioral-emotional problems of derelict children through using hand puppets. In his research Malka (2010) proved that integrating: story telling with group therapy could increase self-esteem, self-confidence, goal detection, fun, problem solving skill and children’s loneliness reduction.

On the other hand role playing is conceived as one of the modern pedagogic methods which put its basis on active cooperation of learners and attempts to help people to find their meaning in the world and seek contribution from the social group in order to make difficult decisions. As one of the advantages of role playing,
children would be able to obtain their own attitudes and perceptions through discussing about them and also develop their troubleshooting skills. (Cacioppo et al., 1986). Considering the fact that role playing happens during calmness, there is no immediate punishment and feedback after an inappropriate behavior, child’s emotions and feelings are discussed during the first phase, the correct behavior is taught through creating a scenario and finally the child is asked about his feelings in that specific situation, it (role playing) can enable the child to identify his feelings in the situation and choose the appropriate response through expressing them (Blanter, 2003). Finally the child becomes able to think about his/her issues and find a solution through understanding the relationship between the theme of story and the theme of his own life (Goldard & Goldard, 2011). Amrollah (2012) proved the effectiveness of role playing on social growth of the adolescence, also on improving public self-help, communicating with others, and directing their own behavior. Also Droudian (2012) illustrated that role playing influence on the social adaptability. In a study done on the effectiveness of : story telling therapy on children whose mothers suffered from breast cancer, Lombard (2008) showed that those children became able to express their experiences freely and give new meanings to them, however the meanings represented were unique and different in terms of children’s age and language. : Story telling therapy contributes to a large number of skills in children which enable to apply those skills appropriately throughout their life. Social skills are among the above-mentioned skills which are defined as a set of acceptable and comprehensive behaviors enabling a person to establish effective relationships with others and prevent unreasonable reactions (Shahim, 2003). Similar to instances of expanding stories, changing human mind have had comprehensive implications for many aspects and domains of psychology both at the theoretical and empirical level (Howard, 1991). When a child reaches the preschool age, his adaptability faces more expectations as a result of expanding relationships with teacher and peer groups. A child at this age should learn how to play with others which necessitates learning skills such as conflict management, assertiveness, cooperation and excitement control (Denham et al., 2004). A child who has gained essential social skills can communicate well with his environment and prevent verbal and physical challenging situations through establishing relationship with others. The child has learned to utilize social skills in order to obtain his goals. Through learning social skills, children gain the ability to face others’ unreasonable behaviors and also learn when utilize the skills (Metson, 1988). Imposing direct changes to psychological applications in people, specifically in children is not easy but accessible through : story telling therapy (Melani, 2004). During : story telling therapy children’s problems are externalized, the effect of issues on their life and the effect of themselves on the problems are depicted, problems are clearly discussed, people share their stories with others in a group and rewrite their stories based on the feedback they receive from others and therapist (Dilalo et.al., 2002). Therefore based on what was mentioned above, the present research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of group : story telling therapy and its role on preschool children’s social skills. So four hypotheses were represented:

- Group : story telling therapy is effective as it plays a role on preschool children’s social skills.
- Group : story telling therapy is effective as it plays a role on preschool children’s social inefficacy.
- Group : story telling therapy is effective as it plays a role on preschool children’s lack of social skills.
- Group : story telling therapy is effective as it plays a role on children’s lack of relationship with peers.

Methods:
Population, Samples and Sampling method:

The population of this research included all the 5-6 years old children in Rasht kindergartens during 2012-2013. 30 samples were selected based on cluster sampling method.

Introducing intervening program:
In this training program the taught skills in each session were performed as unfinished story-telling, question and answer, finished story-telling and role playing. At the end of each session some home works are given to the participants. In this research the: story telling therapy program with a social skill theme was a design developed by the researcher, then it was reviewed based on feedbacks obtained from experts, the final version was handled to the experts (professors) to be approved, and finally it was applied in the research. First 10 stories with themes circling around social skills and were provided which were appropriate for the related age. Then after revision by the related experts 4 stories were selected based on better comprehension and easier identification by children. These stories circled around training social skills through using the structure and framework of the story accompanying role playing. This program aimed to increase the number of choices which children possess in their social interactions and vague situations. Storied were selected by the approve of experts and professors in terms of congruence between the content of stories and the purpose of study which aimed to prove that training social problem solving skill and representing more appropriate alternative solutions are essential for establishing positive interpersonal relationships, recognizing sensations and emotions (fear, shyness, shame, anger) and highlighting the role of feelings and emotions in person’s behavior and others’ reactions.
Instrumentation:
The scaled measurement for social skills by the teachers:

The scaled measurement for social skills was a 56-item questionnaire including three subtests of: social inefficacy (30 items), lack of social skills (30 items) and lack of relationship with peers (15 items). This questionnaire was originated from the children personality questionnaire (Teraskat, 1989) which included 600 items and was developed by Viert, Lakher, Klindinst and Seet (1984). In the foreign group sample which included 1226 people, the cronbach alpha for social skills, social inefficacy, lack of social skills and lack of relationship with peers were reported as 90%, 98%, 81% and 87%, respectively and in the Iranian sample the measured cronbach alpha were reported as 87%, 92%, 85% and 87%, respectively. In order to obtain the total score of the questionnaire, you should use the test key in which answers that match the key receive score 1, otherwise no score would be assigned. The potential range of scores in this test was between 0 and 56. Low scores demonstrated high social skills and high scores showed participants weakness.

Procedure:

First 10 kindergartens were selected among 100 available kindergartens in Rasht based on the random cluster sampling. Then after attracting cooperation of kindergartens’ authorities, the Teraskat social skills questionnaires were distributed among teachers to be handled to 5-6 years old children. Finally 256 questionnaires were returned. After collecting the questionnaires it was reported that 35 children obtained score 44 or higher. 30 children were randomly classified in two groups of control and waiting list. In this process first the names of 30 children were organized based on the scores obtained, then their names were put in two groups in a decussate manner.

The experimental group received narrative therapy accompanying role playing with a social skill theme for 12 sessions, 1 hour per session. The training sessions were hold based on each of 4 selected stories (The Wise Eagle and Kind Friends, Proud Leopard, the Alone TT, the Little Shy Bear). The stories often had themes including: cooperation, communication, interactional skills development and improvement of social and behavoristic and problem solving skills, also development of children’s awareness and ability in dealing with their emotions specifically shame and shyness. Also children were given opportunities to have interactive discussions about theme of stories and role-playings.

Practices and role-playings were designed to increase children’s motivation and cooperation and also effectiveness of the programs. Furthermore other activities such as coloring pictures of stories or painting some scenes, creating encouragement cards by children for each other and also providing cards with paintings of the major characteristics of the stories were used beside the general procedure and based on the situation. At the end of each session and in the presence of mothers, children narrated a summary of stories and then next session assignments were explained clearly for the parents. It should be mentioned that before the start of training sessions, two pedagogic-explanatory sessions were hold for the mothers of children in the experimental group. These two sessions included a review on the gist of stories, narrative therapy, social skills and theories and researches about the influence of story on children. Finally the contents of the stories were handled to mothers in order to encourage their cooperation and adapt them to the interior intervening movement.

Research findings:

Considering the purpose and questions of the current study, the multivariate co-variance statistical test (Mancova) was used. The descriptive results have been represented in Table 1 in terms of groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>mean(pre-test)</th>
<th>mean (post-test)</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inefficacy</td>
<td>control</td>
<td>23.73</td>
<td>19.93</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>23.54</td>
<td>23.67</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of social skill</td>
<td>control</td>
<td>23.19</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>23.67</td>
<td>24.81</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of social relationship</td>
<td>control</td>
<td>12.07</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>12.01</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The statistical characteristics of dependent variables (modified).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean range of population with 95% percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>High level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inefficacy</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>19/58</td>
<td>0/62</td>
<td>18/57, 21/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>23/75</td>
<td>0/62</td>
<td>22/48, 25/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>20/70</td>
<td>0/60</td>
<td>19/47, 21/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>24/83</td>
<td>0/60</td>
<td>23/60, 26/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>9/77</td>
<td>0/54</td>
<td>8/66, 10/89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it can be observed in table 2, the scores of post-test social skills for both control and experimental groups were different after modification. To investigate whether the difference was significant and originated from the training effect or not, the Mancova analysis with a correction procedure of “Bon Ferroni” was applied.

Table 3: The summary of co-variance analysis: group narrative therapy by playing a role on social inefficacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of change</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>eta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social inefficacy</td>
<td>94.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>94.13</td>
<td>18.08</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>130.19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above results, using narrative therapy had influence on social inefficacy indicating f=18/08 and p< 0/001. Therefore it may be concluded that the research hypothesis which claimed narrative therapy training has significant effect on decreasing preschool children social inefficacy was proved. Eta Chi-square attributes 0/42 as the intensity level of effectiveness which is a high amount.

Table 4: The summary of co-variance analysis: group narrative therapy by playing a role on social skill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>SIG</th>
<th>eta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>105.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>105.21</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>120.72</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above table, group narrative therapy has had influence on increasing social skill, F=21/79 and p<0/001 were reported. Therefore it may be concluded that the research hypothesis which claimed group narrative therapy training had influence on increasing preschool children’s social skills has been proved. The Eta chi-square has calculated the intensity of influence as 0/42 which is a high amount.

Table 5: The summary of co-variance analysis: group narrative therapy by playing a role on social interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>SIG</th>
<th>eta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>27.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.72</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>98.83</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above results, group narrative therapy has influence on improving social relationships. F(1,25)=7/01 and p<0/01 were reported. So the research hypothesis which claimed the effectiveness of group narrative therapy on increasing preschool children’s social relationships has been proved. The calculated eta chi-square was 0/22 which indicates a very intensive amount of effect.

Discussion:

The major purpose of the current study was investigating the effectiveness of: story telling group therapy which played a role on social skills of preschool children. In the following part we would explain research hypotheses. The results of the current research were congruent with those obtained by Lombard (2008), Malka (2010), Mojdgan (2012) and Mahmoudi (2012). In order to explain the results it could be mentioned that one of the social responsibilities of a preschool child is learning how to establish successful relationships with peers. Preschool children can learn behaviors such as respecting turns, cooperation, contribution, attention to others’ opinions and anger through interaction with peers. Story takes children to an explanatory travel in the world of symbols and meanings and helps them to face social relationships-related crisis and fears of real life. Story Also impose changes in children’s self-reliance in an indirect and fascinating manner to improve their self-esteem. In line with earlier studies, results of this research demonstrate that presence in the : story telling sessions increase correct responsibility and accountability in children and decrease behavioral issues which are specific characteristics of children who lack social skills. Utilizing the above mentioned techniques not only increased social skills in under study children but also cured anxiety, pertinacity and disobedience-centered disorders.

Another finding of this research illustrated that narrative therapy had significant influence on social inefficacy of preschool children. This finding was congruent with findings of Mojdgan (2012). According to the above mentioned finding, to represent an explanation of the results represented in this part it can be mentioned that social efficacy is a huge structure in which social skill is just a small and important element (Vahab, 2012). Having problem in social skills which is a part of this range causes a variety of behavioral disorders in children. On-time recognition and identification and training appropriate social skills may prevent further problems in children and guide them toward positive social behaviors. One of the effective methods in training social skills to children is storytelling which teaches worthy skills related to social skills through using stories and literature appropriate for them. Based on a theory by Bendora (1999) a child can simulate with the hero
through a substitution experience, analyze the consequences of his behavior, model from that I, utilize it (Tahmasian, 2007) and finally improve his social skills through internalizing the 4 elements of social efficacy.

Another finding of the current study indicated that narrative therapy played an effective role on children’s lack of social skills. It was congruent with the results of researches done by Mojdgan (2012) and Mahmoudi (2012). For further explanation of the research findings it can be mentioned that socializing enable people to establish social relations and interactions with others in all periods of life. Social skill is one of the means which enable social acceptance, creation of social relations and maintenance of social skills during social growth in early years of life and also causes long-term and short-term effects in people lives. Therefore contributing to the social skills which determine the quality of life, empowerment and acceptance of people by the society starts from preschool. Game and story are two integral pillars of a child’s life. Story is similar to an art which stimulate the child, aware him of his inside, cause personality development and expand his interaction with society. Other instruments lack such a power and variety. The last finding which indicated that narrative therapy had an effective role on preschool children’s relationships with peers was congruent with findings of studies done by Amrollah (2012), Mojdgan (2012), and Malka (2010). For further explanation it can be mentioned that the most significant benefit of social skills training is communication. Purpose of communication is establishing a friendly relationship with others and maintaining the present relationships in order to learn how to compromise with peers. An important point for children is to be aware that establishing relationship with adults is different with children, however conceptualizing the difference is complicated for them. A child communicates well with some groups but fails to do with others. Researchers are interested in investigating such issues. In this research the : story telling technique was applied after the analysis in order to increase children’s relationship with peers and enable them to utilize narratives for giving meaning to their lives and solving issues related to interpersonal relationships through integrating, organizing and transferring information.

Generally it may be claimed that children who participated in the story sessions succeeded to create interpersonal and interactional relationships which caused a self-satisfactory feeling in them and others through the substitution experience, simulation principle and modeling from the heroes of the stories. Content of the stories provided children with various perspectives in diverse situations which as a result enabled them to have more control over their behaviors and analyze their problems and issues in a more relaxed manner and finally make more appropriate decisions. It seems that utilizing narrative therapy techniques can be a positive step toward improving the psychological health of children. It is recommended to apply the above mentioned technique in psychological clinics, schools, preschool institutions and kindergartens. Also future researches are needed to optimize the psychological changes processes, treat and develop children’s and adolescence’s psychological health through identifying and applying Iranian and Islamic local and traditional stories in training, pedagogical and therapeutic activities.

REFERENCES


