The Efficacy of Narrative Therapy with Behavioral Cognitive Techniques on Friend Finding Skills, Reduction of Feeling of Loneliness and Increase of Self-Esteem of Boys Studying in Fifth Grade in Rasht City

Farkhondeh Izaddost, Taher Tizdast, Abdolhasan Farhangi

Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 21 April 2014
Received in revised form 23 May 2014
Accepted 13 June 2014
Available online 15 July 2014

Keywords:
Narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques, friendship skills, feeling of loneliness, self-esteem

ABSTRACT

Background: Narrative therapy considered as an effective intervention methods for children with psychological problems. Objective: The present study examines the impact of narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques on friendship skills, decreased feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem in boys studying in fifth grade of elementary school of Rasht city. This is an experimental study with two-group pre-test post-test design. The statistical population of this study includes all boy students studying in fifth grade of elementary schools of Rasht city in 2012-2013. Through cluster sampling, 30 individuals were selected as sample and randomly placed in experimental and control groups (each group including 15 individuals). The instruments used in this study includes Asher Loneliness Scale and (1984), Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (1967), Sacral friendship and unfriendliness questionnaire (1989). Statistical data was analyzed through MANCOVA. Results: The results indicated that narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques has been effective on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem of boys studying in fifth grade of elementary schools of Rasht. The impact of this variable has been obtained as 0.61 for friendship skills, 0.70 for reduced feeling of loneliness and 0.54 for increased self-esteem. Conclusion: Therefore, narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques is effective on friendship skills and play significant role in reducing loneliness feeling and increasing self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Human being is a social creature who needs to communicate with others such that most of his excellent needs, development of his talents and creativities are satisfied through interpersonal interaction and social communications and become activated. Thus, the necessity to learn teachings leading to promotion of social skills seems to be significant (Keykha Farzaneh, 2011). Social skills are a collection of abilities which begin and maintain positive beneficial social relations, expand friendship and intimacy with peers, create satisfactory compatibility in school, allow individuals to compromise with conditions and accept the demands of social environment (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001).

One of the main social skills is the interpersonal relation skill. Some skills of interpersonal relations include cooperation and collaboration with others, making friendship and keeping them, making intimate relations with others, clear expression of thoughts, understanding of others, respecting individuals with different viewpoints, races and religions (Taremi, 2001).

As mentioned, friendship is one of the social skills and by definition, it includes attempts to make close and intimate relation with desired individuals such that he would be able to build an interactional between self and intended others such that they could believe the mental and spiritual manifestations of each other (Shamloo Jani Beig, 1994).

Intimate friends are involved in how to make intimate relation through teaching kids and emotional revolution of child through continuance of emotional support (Ladd, Hartup, 2009). Having intimate friends can preserve the child against stressful events and loneliness and increase self-esteem (Frankel and Myatt, 2003).

Self-esteem includes judgment and attitude that individual continuously expresses about his values (Cooper Smit, 1989). Self-esteem is the degree of approval or confirmation, acceptance and value of individual about
himself. This feeling of individual can be against others or independent of others. Scientific studies have shown that in isolated, lonely individuals with low self-esteem and weakness, mental and physical disease is higher; while, individuals with higher social communication, suffer less from mental and physical diseases (Rich, translated by Qeytasi, 2003). Studies have shown that children without any friends suffer from loneliness and are socially inexperienced (Rubin, Wojswlawowicz, Rose-Krasnor et al, 2006). Feeling of loneliness happens just when the contact and relation of individual with others is false such that no shared emotional experience could be imagined for this mutual relation of individual with others and when there is not real and intimate relation in relation of individual with others. Peplau & Perlman (1982) defined loneliness according to difference and gap between desired level and current level of social relations of individuals by consideration of its qualitative and quantitative aspects. According to them, the basis of feeling of loneliness is the distance and gap between the individuals’ wishes (what he wants) and his achievements (what he has obtained) in interpersonal relations and intimacy. The more is this distance, the higher is feeling of loneliness (Hossein Chari and Kheir, 2002).

There are various methods to help individuals with communication problems, one of them is cognitive-behavioral therapy. During last fifty years, cognitive-behavioral therapies have been considered as an important part of effective psychological therapies for most behavioral problems. Cognitive- behavioral therapy includes various methods, the similarity of them includes emphasis on the role of cognitive-behavioral processes in formation and continuance of psychological disorders and applying experimental methods based on behaviorism and cognitivist for treatment and control of improper responding. Hazlet considers cognitive-behavioral therapy as a medical intervention through reduced frequency and severity of incompatible responses of clients and training of their new cognitive-behavioral skills that lead to meaningful reduction of undesired behaviors and meaningful increased in more compatible behaviors (Khodayari Far, 2002). One of these methods is narrative therapy in form of cognitive-behavioral method.

Use of narrative therapy doesn’t lead to treatment of psychological problems of children like a medical technique. In narrative therapy, it is assumed that change in language and literature of life stories create new opportunities for dealing and communicating with others (Desocio, 2005). Children become familiarize with life realities and experiences through stories and myths (Shoari Nejad, 2011). Being influenced by the story characters, reinforcement of perception and expression, nurturing of creativity, language teaching and increase of vocabulary circle of children are other educational effects of storytelling (Mirza Beigi, 2011). Concerning proper age range for narrative therapy, studies show that both adults and kids can benefit from narrative therapy (Schneider, Dube, 2005). Despite this, it might be possible to say that due to certain condition of childhood in terms of cognitive abilities, kids can make use of narrative therapy more frequently. In fact, proximity of kids to main interpersonal events in everyday life and their involvement in objective aspects of experiences make these events to have stronger penetration in their life stories (Shibani, Yusefi Loye, Delavar, 2006).

Since at late childhood and early adolescence, the incline of kids to peers and group increases, having effective relations and social skills can help them in making successful and proper friendship and increase their self-esteem and prevent isolation. Thus, it is required to empower children by required training and help them in reduction and solving of the problems in this area. Thus, the present study aims at achieving these objectives through responding to the following question:

Is narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques effective on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem of boys studying in fifth grade of elementary schools of Rasht city?

**Methodology:**

The population of the study includes all boys studying in fifth grade of elementary school in Rasht City in 2012-2013. Through cluster sampling 30 subjects were selected as sample and randomly placed in experiment and control groups (15 subjects in each group).

**Research instruments:**

The instruments used for data collection in this study include:

Asher et al feeling of loneliness scale (1984)

This inventory has been constructed by Asher, Hamil and Renshav (1984) for measuring feeling of loneliness in late childhood and pre-adolescence including 24 items. This scale is based on Likert scale based on five point from 1 which is "not true for me" to 5 which means "completely true for me". In reliability calculation, it becomes clear that this scale has proper internal stability. In Ranjbar et al (2011) study, Cronbach's Alpha was obtained as 0.81 (Ranjbar, Kakvand, Danesh, 2011).

Cooper Smith self-esteem inventory (1967)

This inventory has been developed by Cooper Smith (1967) with 58 items out of which 8 item is lie verification and the other 50 items are placed in four subscale including self-esteem, social self-esteem, family self-esteem and educational self-esteem. The scoring method in this test is in form of 0 and 1. This inventory gives one overall score in addition to four subscales. The minimum score that individual can get is 0 and the maximum point is 50. Individuals who obtain score above 25 have high self-esteem and those with score below
it have low self-esteem. The validity and reliability of this test were estimated several times and its final version was performed for English and Arabic language subjects. After six weeks, the test was performed again and its validity was obtained as 0.71 (Cooper Smith, 1967). In Shekar Kan and Neisi study (1994), the validity coefficients obtained through correlating test’s score were calculated with their last year average. The obtained coefficients for girls were 0.71 and for boys, it was 0.69 which were meaningful in 0.001. Furthermore, reliability coefficient of test was reported as 90 and 92 for girls and boys, respectively through retest method (Mahdavi et al, 2010).

Sacral friendship and unfriendliness questionnaire (1989):
This questionaire has been designed by Risman and Bilinghaum (1989) and it can be used for identification of opinions and skills related to loneliness, friendship, ashamedness, lack of social skills and feeling of alienation. This version includes 20 items with four subscales: self-concept, availability, reward, alienation. The total score of the scale is obtained from the scores of subscales. Scoring is done based on Likert scale from completely agree (score 4) to completely disagree (score 1). High score indicates high levels of friendship. Risman and Bilinghaum (1989) reported high level of construct validity concerning the agreement of 0.94 between the scores of this questionaire and the results of scoring the behavior of subjects. In Arefi study (2004 quoting from Akbari, Asli Pour, Kafi Masouleh et al, 2012), the correlation of the subscales of this questionaire was calculated to investigate the construct validity. The correlation coefficients between self-concept subscale and availability, reward and alienation were obtained 0.40- 0.43 and 0.56 in significant level of 0.001 respectively. Moreover the correlation coefficient between alienation subscale and availability and reward subscales were obtained as 0.40 and 0.46 in significience level of 0.001. Just for availability and reward, there was a little positive correlation, correlaton of overal scoe of test-retest was 0.81 and for self-concept, availability, reward and alienation, it was obtained as 0.78, 0.73, 0.81 and 0.76, respectively. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was obtained 0.74 in Arefi study (2004). Furthermore, the results in two execution of the test with time interval of 1 month indicated that the difference between two performances is not meaningful and the have correlation of 0.69. (Akbari et al, 2012).

Method of implementation:
After the selection of statistical smaple of study and specifying the control and experiment groups, the subjects in experiment group participaed in 10 sessions of training courses with duration of 90 minutes which was hold twice in a week. In each training session, one narrative and story in one of the intended topics of the study was performed through various storytelling methods and group work and playing were performed in sessions. Furthermore, home assignments were specified in each session and at the beginning of next session, the assignments were reviewed. The stories and narratives used in this study includes little bat with the center of self-knowledge and self-esteem, kind stone fish with the center of self-acceptance and self-esteem, intelligent pigeons with the center of self-esteem and self-believe, making friendship and communicating with others, friendship collors with the center of friendship and overcomming loneliness, lonely pigeons with the center of overcomming loneliness, small fish and sea eye with the center of friendship, talking snake with the center of friendship and identification and skill in finding good friend, the story of a worm who flies with the center of self-esteem, self-knowledge, overcomming loneliness and friendship. In therapy session, in addition to storytelling some games like word pay, payig with buttons' box were also performed. Furthermore, collage, working on wad and painting were used in homeworks and group works.

Findings:
The present study aims at determining the impact of narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem of boys studying in fifth grade of elementary school in Rasht City. Concerning the research plan, for data analysis, MANCOVA was used, the results of which has been presenet in below table.

Table 1: The modified mean, standard deviation and MANCOVA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>22.31</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>48.49</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>49.69</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in table 1, after modifying the scores of experimental and control groups according to above table and based on Benferron balanced Alpha (0.016), it is clear that narrative therapy with cognitive-
behavioural technique has been effective on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem of students studying in fifth grade of elementary schools of Rasht city (P< 0.01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Df1</th>
<th>Df2</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>η</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilk's Lambda</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>39.07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the results of above table and based on Benefron balanced Alpha (0.016), it is observed that the effect of narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem in a combined variable Partial η= 0.84, Wilk's Lambda= 0.164, F (23, 3)= 39.07 has been meaningful (P< 0.001). That is, narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques has been effective on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem of boys studying in fifth grade of elementary schools of Rasht city and square parabola shows the size of this effect as 0.84 which indicate the high effect. Size effect above 0.14 is considered high size effect.

Furthermore, the results of table (1) show the effect of narrative therapy on each of dependent variables based on Benefrom balanced alpha (0.016). Narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques shows the effect size on friendship skills with F (1, 25) = 38.62 (P<0.001) and square parabola as 0.61. Narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques has been effective on reduced feeling of loneliness with F (1, 25) = 56.94 (P<0.001). The square parabola shows this effect as (0.70). Furthermore, narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral techniques has been effective on increase of self-esteem with F (1, 25) = 29.35 (P< 0.001). Square parabola shows this effect as (0.54).

Discussion and conclusion:
The results of data analysis showed that narrative therapy with cognitive-behavioral technique is effective on friendship skills, reduced feeling of loneliness and increased self-esteem of boys studying in fifth grade of elementary schools of Rasht city. Moreover, they have the highest effect on reduced feeling of loneliness, friendship and self-esteem. Since children cannot identify their thoughts and feelings easily, narrative therapy is proposed as one of the best methods of children consultant and psychology (Tompson and Roulph, 2005).

In story and narrative, the child usually identifies with the characters and develops problem-solving skills by making hypothesis and providing various solutions for solving the challenges of the story characters (Asqari Nekahi, 2003). At the end, the child can directly think of his own issue by understanding the relation between the subject of the story and his life and find a solution (Goldardo Goldard, Arjmandi, 2010).

In fact, when the children listen to the story or complete an unfinished story, they place themselves in the role of the hero and in fact go through their conflicts. They might unconsciously borrow the skills and solutions that the story characters use, this leads them to be able to overcome their previous and past failures and see their future meaningful (Shibani et al, 2006). The use of different techniques of narrative therapy can lead to reinforcement of self-esteem, reduced feeling of loneliness and proper communication in kids. Some of these techniques include helping kids to increase emotional self-awareness through identification of feelings and emotions of the hero of the stories, making stories by emotional words, expressing their feeling within the stories, kids' listening to stories with some themes including power, energy and motion, speaking with kids about the outcomes of therapy, the stories that they tell or listen and the kids' listening to stories which indicate their similar problems and leads to effective and positive solutions.

One thing that is important for kids in their childhood is to be accepted by peers which depend on having some personality features. In overall, the governing characteristics of culture and society where the kids live are very important. While the negative characteristics like underdevelopment leads to kids' withdrawal. The friendly kids have more friendly behavior, are eccentric and skillful in communicating with others (Musten et al, translated by Yasaey, 2001). An individual, who lacks the ability of effective communication, doesn't know proper ways of communication. If he participates in narrative therapy session, not only his presence and his communication within the group can make him learn regulations and behaviors of effective communication, but also, his listening of imaginary trips with the stories designed with this aim can make him search his communication problems. Moreover, he will be able to learn proper communication methods by proper imitation of the character and practicing it as homework and apply them in his life. When the individual learns effective communication, he could achieve successful communication and this can be the beginning of a proper friendship.

The results of the study showed that narrative therapy is effective in reduction of feeling of loneliness which is in line with Stacey and Edwards (2013) study. In Stacey and Edwards study (2013), aiming at investigating the effect of narrative therapy in reducing feeling of loneliness, the participant could know and realize their loneliness and its effects, realize their weakness and strengths and try to change it; moreover, at the end of the course, they had positive feedback. In other words, narrative therapy leads to reduced feeling of loneliness. However, in Sanat Kar study (2011), the results obtained about feeling of loneliness showed that...
reduction of loneliness of experimental group had not meaningful difference in comparison with control and semi-control group. This finding contradicts with the results of the present study.

Feeling of loneliness is a psychological status due to qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in social relations and this feeling is manifested in situations when the exciting relations are less than what the individual desired or don't satisfy his required intimacy; moreover, it might happen in any age. An individual with feeling of loneliness cannot have proper performance in most social situations and he might have unpleasant experiences of the social situations such that when he is confronted with those situations, he might feel those previous unpleasant experiences. Moreover, since he is not willing to repeat that experience, he prefers to avoid it and this aggregates his feeling of loneliness. It seems that by providing safe situations with imaginary trips and proper patterns for kids, narrative therapy can help them change their improper attitudes, evaluate the situations more positively and be more willing to be present in group, this can be effective in reduction of feeling of loneliness.

Another result of this study is the efficacy of narrative therapy on increase of self-esteem which is in line with the results of Soltani and Amir Pour (2011) and Zah Mohammad et al (2012) studies. The results of Soltani and Amir Pour study (2011) indicate effectiveness of group narrative therapy on increase of kids’ self-esteem and show the applicability of story and its structure in teaching and promotion of mental health of kids. Zad Mohammad et al (2012) asserted that this therapy could tangibly increase self-esteem and self-efficacy in these individuals.

In explaining this conclusion, it can be argued that narrative in narrative therapy provides a ground where the listener can project his life story on it and gives the story real meaning. The most powerful mechanism which acts here might be assimilation, meaning that, the client place himself in the role and place of the main character and tries to imitate what the character has done or avoided. If the story is open ended and ambiguous, the client might do projection and try to find a solution for the certain conflict in the story. In other words, storytelling can be effective in making extraordinary skill of storytelling and self-esteem and make him believe that he can realize the structure, laws and regulations of the story and evaluate it with his brave thoughts and obtain the required skills for determining his fate (Radbaksh, Mohammadi Far, Kian Ersi, 2013).

In overall, since the common theme of all stories is to discover the positive characteristics and internal abilities, the positive and happy end of these stories has provided an opportunity for subjects to achieve a new understanding of self and feeling of ability. The practices related to homework have been such that they should continuously and regularly prevent the subjects from thinking about positive characteristics and talents. Concerning the results obtained from this study and positive effect of narrative therapy on research variables, it is recommended to use this method in educational and training programs of kids, promote the social skills (friendship) and self-esteem, and reduce negative feelings in them. Furthermore, it is suggested that the children psychotherapy and consultant centers to focus more on this method and train experts for this.

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