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The Effectiveness of gender education on the gender identity of 7-11-year-old children in Shiraz

Somayeh Yazdani*
Nadereh Sohrabi Shegefti**

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of sexual education on the sexual identity of children from 7 to 11 years old in Shiraz. 56 students of the elementary school in the region of Shiraz in the academic year 97-1396 were voluntarily selected and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups. The experimental group received eight 45-minute sessions of sexual education. While the control group did not receive any intervention. Students completed the Gender Role Identity questionnaire of children in different cultures before and after the intervention. Data were analyzed using covariance analysis and SPSS software. The results of this study showed that sexual education leads to the formation of sexual identity in students.

Keywords: sexual education, sexual identity, sexual self-esteem.

Extended abstract

Introduction

Childhood wounds and injuries are transmitted from one generation to another, just like a legacy, and parents who have experienced a certain stage of their development are likely to be in trouble at the same stage of their child's development. Everyone seems to have more or less a small inner chamber that is even hidden from herself. In this chamber, it is possible to find the tools and gadgets left for her childhood show. Those who are most affected by this chamber are descendants (Kanani, 2017).

One of the most important aspects of human identity is gender identity which manifests itself in the form of formal and informal institutions during the process of socialization. The success of this process leads to the formation of a society-compatible sexual identity (Ceglie, 2000). A person with a healthy sexual identity

* Master of science in Psychology, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University

** Assistant Professor in Psychology, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University
Sohrabi_sh2006@yahoo.com

Can state with certainty whether he/she is a man or a woman. In fact, humans must have their gender identity adequately developed (Atkinson & Hilgard, 2000, cited in Baraheni, 1395) in order to obtain the social and sexual experiences which are satisfactory and satisfying in their adulthood. Sexual identity is a psychological state that reflects a person's inner sense of being a man or a woman. In most people, this feeling appears at the age between 2 to 3. (Sadock & Sadock, 2015, cited in Ganji, 1396).

Unfortunately, because of cultural taboos, in some countries like Iran, sexual information is misdiagnosed among children. Therefore, a child grows up without saying anything about sexual matters, and many of his curiosities are suppressed. When the world is opened to a baby, he brings passion and vitality with him which need to be preserved. In fact, we must pay attention to everything that is a part of the stages of his growth, and never ignore anything.

As children grow older, the role of the external factors such as peers, teachers, school, textbooks and mass media become more important in shaping the role of sexual learning, (Abroshan & Arjmandi, 2015). Each society, with its formal rules and informal norms, determines what should be done by both men and women, what roles they can or should take, and which personality traits are appropriate to them (Atkinson & Hilgard, 2000; Baraheni, 2015).

Considering the content of this article, it can be said that correct and timely education can help a child grow healthy and place him at a high standard of humanity. Sex education is one of the types of education that can be found along with other areas of education including social education, moral education, and political education. Being inspired by the theoretical foundations and existing research and taking into account the importance of creating and strengthening the gender identity variable among children, the purpose of this study was to explain the effectiveness of sexual education on the gender identity of primary school children in Shiraz. It was actually assumed that healthy sexual development is the right of all children. Today, unfortunately, we are witnessing some common sexual disorders among which the disorder of sexual identity can be named. In this study, an attempt was made to determine whether the education of sexual can affect gender identity.

Method

The current research was a quasi-experimental study. The current population included male and female students of elementary schools in Shiraz during the academic years of 2016-2017. 56 students were selected by voluntary sampling and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

Instrument

The Gender Role Identity Questionnaire. This question in different cultures is used (Schertzer Silvera, Laufer, & McBride 2008), and consists of 16 items including male-gender characteristics (8 items), and female-gender

characteristics (8 items). This questionnaire is used to verify gender role identity in different cultures. Schertzer (2008) evaluated this tool as self-righteous and its reliability estimated by Cronbach's alpha was higher than 0.86. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71.

Trend of research

After performing the pre-test on all participants and selecting the experimental group using the package of the sex education workshop presented by Honarparvaran (2018); training for experiment group was done about 8 session 45 minutes, considering Iranian ethics and culture, as well as age and curiosity of children. After the training sessions, both the experimental and control groups were re-evaluated in the same conditions and the results were analyzed by multivariate analysis of covariance analysis using statistical software.

Finding

Table 1
Mean and standard deviation Men's and feminine features in experimental and control groups

Variable	Pre- test			Post- test			
	group	M	SD	group	M	SD	
Dimensions of gender role identity	Men's characteristics	control	24.79	3.80	Control	24.50	3.54
		experimental	34.43	3.79	experimental	52.29	6.60
	Feminine characteristics	control	31.71	5.61	Control	31.18	5.20
		experimental	32.21	5.56	experimental	45.39	6.19

As seen in Table 1, the mean scores of the experimental group were increased from pre-test to post-test in dependent variables.

Table 2
The results of the covariance analysis gender role identity

Indicator	Variable	SS	Df	MS	F	p
pre-test	Men's Features	231.22	1	231.22	22.48	< 0.001
	Female characteristics	201.89	1	201.89	7.65	< 0.001
group	Men's Features	136.37	1	136.37	13.26	< 0.001
	Female characteristics	36.00	1	36.00	1.36	0.248
error	Men's Features	534.79	52	1028	-	-
	Female characteristics	1372.03	52	26.38	-	-
Total	Men's Features	34690.00	56	-	--	-
	Female characteristics	58908.00	56	-	-	-

As you can see in table 2, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in male gender role identity characteristics ($F= 13.26, p < 0.001$). But there is not a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in female gender role identity characteristics ($F = 1.36, p = 248$).

Discussion

In all the studies that have been conducted on the impact of gender education, it has been always emphasized to consider the important role of educational factor during different stages of a child's development as a way to achieve true sexual knowledge and consequently obtain a healthy gender identity which is essential in the process of sexual development. Gender identity, which generally manifests itself as a man or woman, begins with childhood, and it is closely related to the gender role of an individual in a society. Therefore, it can be said that two strong issues called physiological forces and social learning interact with one another in the form of gender identity (Sigli, 2000). This part of the identity of children with sexual questions begins at about 2.5 years of age. At this time, a child is able to identify himself and others as a girl or boy. In the process of evolving gender identity, which includes sexual stability and sexual stability, a child gradually becomes aware of the persistence of his or her gender and then others, despite apparent changes in dress or behavior. It should be noted that a child does not have enough knowledge before the sexual stabilization stage to recognize gender based on the genital tract. Therefore, the formation of a stable sexual identity in children is one of the most difficult and, at the same time, the most delicate educational aspects which contributes greatly to the future of a child.

Correct and timely sexual education can be very effective in building a healthy sexual identity in children because it guarantees sexual health and mental health in later stages. Sexual education tailored to the development of children does not discourage children's sexual curiosity and also reduce the risk of diverting children's minds towards sexuality, so a child needs to recognize herself for a healthy sexual identity and has a deep understanding of her own gender as girl or boy (Kohlberg, 1969). Therefore, with regular sexual education, a child becomes aware of both the anatomy and personality of a girl and a boy, and gets acquainted with different parts of his body and learns about his own organs with their correct names. It is very important to use the correct name for the private organs, and in particular the genital area, to prevent maladaptive schemas in future. Children are curious to know where they come from, how a baby falls into the mother's abdomen, and some other questions that engage children's minds. Such questions can only be addressed in the context of sexual education in which the responses

can lead to a child's mental engagement and growth as well as his healthy sexual identity. Of course, it should be noted that in the process of sexual education, gender role should be proportional to the anatomy and physiology of a child's body.

If sexual training is neglected, a child's gender identity is likely to be problematic and some common sexual disorders may arise among children. Consequently, an individual's mindset varies from one sex to another with sexual organs. Since sexual health is one of the pillars of the mental health of individuals, it can affect other aspects of mental and communicative life in the event of a disorder (Ghalandari & Rafiee, 2014). Curiosity and unwanted sexual questions are created in children's minds, and our ignorance and inability to answer them make children confused about sexual issues. Therefore, sexual education is a preventive measure that is taken to keep the child safe.

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