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The Effect of Life Skills Training on Hospital Employees: From Self-Awareness to Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Mental health and well-being of employees, especially in high-stress environments like hospitals, are a major concern for organizations and researchers. Hospital staff are frequently exposed to stressful situations, including critical patient care, emotional strain from patient interactions, and heavy workloads. This can lead to burnout, decreased motivation, and reduced quality of work life—ultimately affecting both their mental health and the quality of healthcare services.

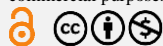
Objectives: The present study aimed to examine the impact of a life skills training program on five key outcomes: self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and job satisfaction in the staff of Golestan Hospital in Ahvaz.

Methods: The study employed a quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test design with a control group. The statistical population included all hospital employees available during the months of April to July 2025. A total sample of 46 employees was selected using simple random sampling and then randomly assigned to either an experimental or a control group (22-24 participants each). The research design was a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test with a control group. The experimental group received 8 weekly 90-minute sessions of life skills training. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Findings: The results showed that life skills training significantly improved self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and job satisfaction in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Conclusion: Life skills training represent an effective intervention for enhancing psychological well-being and job satisfaction among hospital staff.

Keywords: life skills training, self-compassion, self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, job satisfaction



Introduction

Nowadays, mental health and well-being of employees in the workplace—especially in high-stress environments such as hospitals—are one of the main priorities for organizations and researchers. Hospital staff are constantly exposed to stressful situations including caring for critically ill patients, managing intense emotional pressure from patient and family interactions, and handling demanding workloads. These factors put them at risk of burnout, decreased motivation, and a decline in the quality of work life. Such challenges can severely affect employees' mental health and job performance, ultimately leading to a reduction in the quality of healthcare services(1,2).

As defined by the World Health Organization, life skills are a set of psychological and social abilities that enable individuals to cope effectively and adaptively with the challenges of everyday life. These skills include self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, and stress management. They can play a significant role in enhancing mental health and increasing occupational resilience among hospital staff(3,4).

Given the profound impact these skills have on resilience and well-being, it follows that a lack of life skills may prevent employees from effectively coping with workplace pressures and challenges. This can lead to increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. Recent studies indicate that training interventions based on life skills and self-compassion can significantly improve indicators of mental health, job satisfaction, and quality of professional performance, while simultaneously mitigating burnout among hospital staff(7–5). Furthermore, recent research has shown that self-compassion training and associated meditation practices decrease levels of occupational burnout and boost both job satisfaction and self-compassion (8,9).

Low levels of self-compassion, inadequate social self-efficacy, poor self-awareness, and difficulties in emotional regulation are among the factors that negatively impact job performance and employee satisfaction. Training and strengthening these skills have been emphasized in numerous recent studies, serving as evidence-based interventions aimed at providing targeted psychological support. Such interventions can contribute to the preservation of mental health, improvement of interpersonal relationships, enhancement of self-efficacy, and ultimately, the promotion of job satisfaction among hospital staff(7,10,11).

Due to constant exposure to stress, suffering, and high job demands, healthcare workers face unique psychological challenges which often contribute to emotional exhaustion, interpersonal conflicts, and decreased job satisfaction. Consequently, interventions that strengthen psychological resources are essential for sustaining

both individual well-being and organizational performance in hospital environments.

Life skills training has been widely recognized as an effective psychosocial intervention for enhancing mental health and adaptive functioning. Prior studies have documented its benefits in improving self-compassion(12), social self-efficacy(13), emotional regulation, and job satisfaction. However, the majority of these studies have examined these outcomes in isolation, rather than assessing their interplay within a single intervention program.

The present study addresses this gap by simultaneously examining the effects of a structured life skills training program on multiple psychological outcomes, including self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and job satisfaction in hospital staff. By integrating these interrelated constructs into one intervention, the study not only evaluates individual-level improvements but also considers their implications for hospital service quality, teamwork, and organizational efficiency. This multidimensional approach represents the key innovation of the research.

1. Objectives

In high-pressure hospital environments, staff are constantly exposed to challenges such as chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and interactions with patients in critical conditions. These factors can lead to diminished mental health, reduced quality of work life, and increased turnover intention. Therefore, life skills training, as a preventive intervention, can enhance capacities such as self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation, thereby contributing to improved resilience and job performance. From an organizational perspective, strengthening employees' mental health is directly linked to reduced absenteeism, improved professional interactions, and enhanced productivity. Additionally, from a societal standpoint, promoting the mental well-being of healthcare staff can lead to higher quality care and increased patient satisfaction, ultimately improving public health. Despite the growing emphasis on psychological training in healthcare settings, few studies have comprehensively examined the impact of life skills training on a combination of psychological and occupational variables such as self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and job satisfaction among hospital staff. Addressing this research gap which is significant from individual, organizational, and societal perspectives, the present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of life skills training on psychological and occupational outcomes among hospital staff. Specifically, the objectives were: a) to evaluate the effect of life skills training on self-compassion among hospital employees; b) to determine the impact of life skills training on social self-

efficacy; c) to assess the influence of life skills training on self-awareness; d) to examine whether life skills training improves emotion regulation abilities; and e) to investigate the effect of life skills training on job satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

The present study employed a quasi-experimental design using a pretest-posttest control group with follow-up. It is an applied research project that examined the impact of a life skills training program on five key outcomes: self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and job satisfaction among the staff of Golestan Hospital in Ahvaz. The study population consisted of all employees of Golestan Hospital in Ahvaz available in the year 2025. Participants were selected using simple random sampling from the pool of eligible staff members. Eligibility required a minimum of one year of work experience, no history of severe psychiatric disorders, and the expressed willingness to participate. Based on Cochran's formula, with a 95% confidence level and 80% statistical power, a total sample size of 60 individuals was determined, with 30 participants assigned to the experimental group and 30 to the control group.

- **Intervention and Procedure**

Participants were randomly allocated to experimental and control groups in a 1:1 ratio using a computer-generated random number list. Allocation concealment was ensured by assigning anonymous participant codes prior to randomization, with group assignments revealed only after enrollment.

Although 60 participants were initially recruited (30 per group), 14 participants withdrew prior to post-test data collection due to scheduling conflicts ($n = 6$), personal reasons ($n = 5$), or non-attendance (< 3 sessions; $n = 3$). The final sample analyzed included 46 participants (27 females, 19 males). Attrition was balanced across groups (7 in each) and is addressed in the Limitations section.

The life skills training intervention was designed based on the World Health Organization's guidelines(14) and implemented through eight weekly 90-minute group sessions for the hospital staff. The content of the sessions included fundamental psychological and social skills such as self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, decision-making, problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, and coping with stress and emotions.

Intervention fidelity was maintained through multiple strategies:

Sessions were delivered by a licensed clinical psychologist.

A standardized manual was strictly followed.

Attendance was recorded, and 87% of participants completed all sessions, with the remainder attending at least 6 sessions.

A senior supervisor observed two randomly selected sessions to ensure protocol adherence.

The trainer completed a structured checklist after each session.

Each session began with a review of its objectives, followed by the theoretical and practical presentation of key concepts(15). Activities such as role-playing, group discussions, cognitive exercises, and relaxation techniques were employed to reinforce learning. The primary goal of this program was to enhance participants' psychological capabilities in facing occupational challenges and to promote their mental well-being.

A variety of active learning methods were used to deliver the life skills training, including interactive lectures, group discussions, Q&A sessions, individual and group exercises, role-plays, case studies based on hospital workplace scenarios, multimedia presentations, and mindfulness and meditation practices. These methods aimed to increase engagement, facilitate experiential learning, and ensure effective knowledge transfer.

- **Measures**

In this study, life skills training was considered the independent variable, while self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and job satisfaction were treated as the dependent variables. After assigning participants to the experimental and control groups, obtaining the necessary permissions, and securing informed consent from the participants (hospital staff), a pretest was administered to both groups using the following instruments:

Self-Compassion Scale(16), Social Self-Efficacy Scale(17), Self-Awareness Scale(18) Emotion Regulation Questionnaire(19), Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire(20).

The study protocol adhered to the ethical guidelines and received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch (Ref. ID: IR.IAU.AHVAVZ.REC.1403.321).

- **Data Analysis**

The total number of participants was 46, consisting of 27 women and 19 men. The gender composition was approximately balanced across both groups. Prior to conducting the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to test the hypotheses, it was necessary to examine the underlying assumptions of this analysis. These assumptions were assessed first, followed by the hypothesis testing presented separately. Baseline comparisons between the experimental and control groups on demographic variables (age, gender, work experience, and shift schedule) revealed no statistically significant differences. While ANCOVA controlled for pre-test scores, other potential confounders (e.g.,

baseline stress or prior training) were not included due to sample size limitations.

Subsequently, the experimental group underwent the WHO-based life skills training protocol, which consisted of eight weekly 90-minute sessions. After the intervention, a posttest (re-administration of the same questionnaires) was conducted for both groups, and the data from the pretest and posttest were analyzed.

In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the collected data from the experimental and control groups. The significance level was set at 0.05, and data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.

Results

To examine the normality of score distributions, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used. The results indicated that the distribution of scores for all five variables in both groups was normal. In order to assess the interaction between the group variable and the pretest scores, an analysis of variance was conducted. The results showed that the interaction be-

tween the group and pretest scores was not statistically significant for any variable. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met.

To investigate the effect of life skills training on self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and job satisfaction, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used. In this analysis, the pretest scores were considered as covariates, and the group (experimental/control) was treated as the independent variable. Prior to this, the assumptions required for ANCOVA (normality, homogeneity of regression slopes, and homogeneity of variances) had been tested and confirmed. As a result, the hypothesis testing was appropriately carried out. Given the F value of 17.01 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$, it can be concluded that life skills training significantly increased self-compassion among employees in the experimental group compared to the control group. Additionally, the Eta Squared value of 0.241 indicates that life skills training accounted for a relatively large effect (24%) on the variance in self-compassion (Table1).

Table 1. Results of ANCOVA for examining the effectiveness of life skills training on self-compassion

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	Sig.	Effect Size (Eta ²)
Pretest	108.56	1	108.56	14.73	0.001	0.216
Group (Experimental/Control)	125.33	1	125.33	17.01	0.000	0.241
Error	447.68	59	7.59	–	–	–
Total	–	61	–	–	–	–

The analysis of covariance showed that, after controlling for pretest scores, the two groups differed significantly in their posttest mean scores of social self-efficacies. The F value was 16.26 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that life skills training had a positive effect on increasing social

self-efficacy among employees in the experimental group. Additionally, the Eta Squared value of 0.216 reflects a relatively strong effect size of the intervention, meaning that approximately 21.6% of the variance in social self-efficacy scores can be explained by the life skills training (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of ANCOVA for Examining the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Social Self-Efficacy

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	Sig.	Effect Size (Eta ²)
Pretest	94.21	1	94.21	12.82	0.001	0.178
Group	119.45	1	119.45	16.26	0.000	0.216
Residual Error	433.12	59	7.34	-	-	-
Total	-	61	-	-	-	-

The results of the analysis of covariance indicated that, after controlling for the pretest scores, there was a significant difference between the two groups in posttest self-awareness scores ($F = 13.00$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that life skills training significantly increased self-awareness in employees of the

experimental group compared to the control group. In addition, the Eta Squared value of 0.193 indicates a moderate to strong effect of the training on self-awareness; approximately 19% of the variance in posttest self-awareness scores can be explained by the intervention (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of ANCOVA for Examining the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Self-Awareness

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	Sig.	Effect Size (Eta ²)
Pretest	87.90	1	87.90	11.62	0.001	0.165
Group	98.23	1	98.23	13.00	0.001	0.193
Residual Error	445.82	59	7.56	-	-	-
Total	-	61	-	-	-	-

The results of the analysis of covariance showed that, after controlling for the pretest scores, there was a significant difference between the two groups in posttest self-awareness scores ($F = 13.00$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that life skills training significantly increased self-awareness in employees of the experi-

mental group compared to the control group. Furthermore, the Eta Squared value of 0.193 represents a moderate to strong effect of the training on self-awareness; nearly 19% of the variance in posttest self-awareness scores is explained by the intervention (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of ANCOVA for Examining the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Emotion Regulation

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	Sig.	Effect Size (Eta ²)
Pretest	76.38	1	76.38	10.21	0.002	0.147
Group	95.44	1	95.44	12.76	0.001	0.178
Residual Error	442.91	59	7.51	-	-	-
Total	-	61	-	-	-	-

The results of the analysis of covariance showed that, after controlling for the effect of pretest scores, there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in posttest emotion regulation scores ($F = 12.76$, $p = 0.001$). This finding indicates that life skills training significantly increased emotion

regulation ability in employees of the experimental group. Additionally, the Eta Squared value of 0.178 suggests that approximately 18% of the variance in emotion regulation can be attributed to the effect of the training, which is considered a relatively substantial effect size (Table 5).

Table 5. Results of ANCOVA for Examining the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Job Satisfaction

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	Sig.	Effect Size (Eta ²)
Pretest	81.64	1	81.64	10.64	0.002	0.153
Group	106.70	1	106.70	13.91	0.000	0.191
Residual Error	452.63	59	7.67	-	-	-
Total	-	61	-	-	-	-

Based on the results of the analysis of covariance, there was a significant difference between the two groups in posttest job satisfaction scores ($F = 13.91, p < 0.001$). Therefore, life skills training significantly increased job satisfaction among employees in the

experimental group compared to the control group. The Eta Squared value of 0.191 also indicates that approximately 19% of the variance in job satisfaction is attributed to life skills training, representing a relatively large effect size.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrated that life skills training has a significant impact on improving various components of mental health, including self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and job satisfaction among hospital staff. These results are fully consistent with prior theoretical and empirical literature and support the critical role of educational interventions in enhancing psychological functioning in high-stress occupational environments (21).

First, the increase in self-compassion following the intervention indicates that life skills can reduce negative self-critical attitudes and instead foster acceptance, empathy, and self-support. This outcome aligns with Neff's theory of self-compassion, which posits that self-compassion especially during stressful situations enhances psychological resilience. Other studies have similarly confirmed the role of life skills training in promoting self-compassion (12,22).

On the other hand, the improvement in social self-efficacy after training reflects the effectiveness of these interventions in enhancing individuals' ability to manage interpersonal relationships and communication efficacy. This finding is consistent with Bandura's self-efficacy theory (23) emphasizing the key role of belief in one's capabilities in achieving social success. Empirical evidence from other studies (13,24) has also shown that training in communication and problem-solving skills improves social self-efficacy among adolescents and employees.

The significant increase in self-awareness also supports the idea that life skills training, by focusing on the understanding of emotions, thoughts, and reac-

tions, can lead to enhanced personal insight and self-regulation. This finding corresponds with Goleman's research (25) on emotional intelligence and the role of self-awareness in effective decision-making. Additional studies (26,27) have confirmed the effect of life skills education on increasing emotional self-awareness among nurses.

Regarding emotion regulation, the results indicate that life skills have strengthened employees' ability to control and direct negative emotions in high-pressure situations. This outcome is in line with Gross's perspectives (27) on cognitive and behavioral emotion regulation strategies. Furthermore, other studies (28-30) have reported the effectiveness of educational interventions in improving emotion regulation.

Finally, enhanced job satisfaction was another positive consequence of life skills training. This finding suggests that by increasing psychosocial competencies, employees' attitudes toward their job and work environment improved. Several studies (31-33) have shown that the development of life skills significantly increases job satisfaction through enhanced feelings of competence and reduced job-related conflicts. In summary, it can be concluded that life skills training, by impacting key components of mental health, can serve as a cost-effective and efficient psychological empowerment intervention for employees in clinical and high-stress settings such as hospitals. It is therefore recommended that these interventions be integrated continuously and systematically into human resource training programs within the healthcare system.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths of this study include its quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control design and the novel simultaneous assessment of multiple psychological and occupational outcomes. Limitations include: (1) single-site recruitment, limiting generalizability; (2) modest sample size with 23% attrition; (3) lack of follow-up data, preventing evaluation of long-term effects; (4) absence of direct organizational outcome measures (e.g., patient satisfaction, absenteeism); and (5) reliance on self-report instruments. Future research should involve multi-center trials, longer follow-up, objective service outcomes, and examination of moderators such as work experience or specialty area.

Conclusion

In summary, life-skills training significantly improved self-compassion, social self-efficacy, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and job satisfaction among hospital employees. The program appears to be a feasible and promising staff-support intervention for similar healthcare settings.

Footnotes

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Authors' Contribution: Ziba Shokuhmand contributed to the study design, data collection, and drafting of the manuscript. Amin Zamiri conceptualized the study, supervised the research process, and critically revised the manuscript for intellectual content. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and take responsibility for its content.

Conflict of Interests Statement: The authors declared no conflict of interests.

Ethical Approval: This study obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch, after the research proposal was submitted and reviewed (Ref. ID: IRIAU.AHVAZ.REC.1403.321).

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