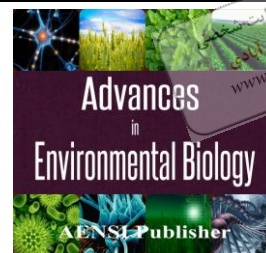




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Effectiveness of Metacognitive Skills Training in Trainees' Self -Efficacy

Masoumeh Maftahi, Abdullah Shafi Abadi, Ghodsi Ahghar

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

Self -efficacy is one of the most important components of achieving success and adjustment in the field of psychology. Educational centers can increase the self-efficacy levels of students using different methods. One of the most effective ways to foster the self-efficacy is resorting to the methods of thinking rather than teaching the thoughts. According to most experts, the training methods based on the principles and methods of metacognition can help accomplish this mission. The research purpose is to investigate the effectiveness of metacognitive skills training in trainees' self -efficacy. The research employed a semi-experimental method with pretest, posttest and control group design. Firstly the self-efficacy questionnaire was administered on the trainees studying in the vocational training centers located in the 6th boroughs of Tehran City. A sample of 60 individuals was randomly selected from among the trainees who had scored lower than average. Secondly, they were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by Sherer *et al* (1982), and Kenly (1989) were the data gathering tools. The experimental group underwent eight 90-minute sessions of training while the control group didn't receive any intervention. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive (frequency, percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (covariance). Results indicated that metacognitive training skills increase the general and social self-efficacy of the students. Considering the results, it can also be concluded that meta-cognitive skills training can be regarded as an effective non-pharmaceutical and treatment method in boosting the individuals' self-efficacy, particularly among the trainees of vocational training centers.

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INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy is a key concept in the social cognitive theory of Bandura. The theoretical basis of self-efficacy has been tested in various disciplines and fields and benefits increasing theoretical and experimental support. Self-efficacy is a stable emotion which indicates the individual's competence and capacity to cope with stressful life events [16]. Self-efficacy refers to the feelings of self-esteem, self-worth, feelings of competence and efficiency in handling life and dealing with its obstacles [3]. Self-efficacy is the confidence in one's ability to control thoughts, feelings and actions and therefore, is effective in producing the outcomes of actions. Expectations of self-efficacy is effective in individuals' actual performance, emotions, behavior selection and the amount of efforts devoted to an activity [17]. Burke [5] contends that self-efficacy takes on a critical role in inhibiting or the stability of the behavior in various situations. Woul [21] reports that if the students believe that their considerable efforts lead to learning, try their best, hardest and utmost and persevere with the problems which arise. They also focus on the problems and develop feelings of happiness and peace and employ more effective strategies. Self-efficacy is one of the most important components of achieving success and adjustment in the realm of psychology and educational centers can boost their students' self-efficacy. One of the most effective ways to foster the self-efficacy is resorting to the methods of thinking rather than teaching the thoughts. According to most experts, the training methods based on the principles and methods of metacognition can help accomplish this mission. One key area of interest in terms of metacognition for many researchers is that they believe that metacognition encompasses many implications in the field of education. For example, Baker, Baker and Brown, Brown *et al*, Flavell, Marks and Paris contend that metacognitive skills occupy great role in various cognitive activities such as verbal information exchange, good reading comprehension, motivation, verbal comprehension, writing, language, learning, perception, attention, memory, problem solving, and social cognition. Generally, metacognitive strategies training sets the scene for scientific involvement, internal locus of

Corresponding Author: Masoumeh Maftahi, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran.

control, positive attributions, achievement motivation, creativity, constructiveness, and self-responsibility, it also helps individuals in strengthening the self-confidence in life affairs, enabling the individuals to identify the problems, testing out their activities, acting independently, and providing the best solutions in different issues. Kadivar [8] defines metacognition as the individual's knowledge about his/her system of cognition and its control. According to Kadivar, metacognition is the cognition beyond cognition and normal thinking. Marzano [18] argues that metacognition as defined by psychologists is the knowledge about thinking activities, learning and their control or the assessment of the knowledge of oneself, cognitive processes, outcomes or their related matters. Burke [5] contends that metacognition is the individual's ability to think about his/her own thinking process, close attention to them and particularly the individual's effort for higher cognitive ability. Martinez [11] considers metacognition as a multifaceted concept which involves knowledge, belief, process and strategies that assesses monitors and controls the cognition. Many experts including Jacobs belief that any kinds of reform in the educational system requires considering the findings of studies done in metacognition and its application in educational planning [13]. An investigation into the studies carried out in this realm indicates that self-efficacy is one of the most crucial factors of behavior regulation which induces self-regulation and improvement of the quality of life. It helps the individuals confront challenging and ambiguous settings. It also provides the individuals with the opportunity to recognize their real capacities and increases the individual's acceptance and self-confidence. Moreover, the studies demonstrate that there are a number of contributing factors in to boosting the level of self-efficacy of individuals, out of which metacognitive skills and strategies training can be mentioned. In light of such skills, the decision-making skills, constructive interaction with others, planning, deep thinking, reality-based judgments, respect for conflicts of interest, self-control, self-assessment and peaceful relationship with others can be enhanced among the learners. Multiple individual and contextual factors such as personality, cognitive styles and psychological environment can exert effect on the establishment of a self-efficient behavior in an individual. Self-efficacy is the individual's ability in influencing the behavior instead of mechanical responses to the environment. In recent decades, researchers have found mechanism by which self-efficacy can be enhanced. Moreover, relatively new discussions such as the learners' self-efficacy and its boosting strategies have been brought into light [3,23,24]. Researchers have also demonstrated that for high academic achievement, learner should learn how to regulate their activities to attain their goals [14,23,24]. A self-efficient learner regulates his/her feelings, thoughts, behaviors and actions to achieve his/her educational goals.

Most of the successful learners have adequate level of self-efficacy beliefs and motivation [3,24]. For example, some of the researchers highlight hidden cognitive beliefs such as self-efficacy and anxiety in self-regulation [23]. Studies indicate that high self-efficacy in the process of learning leads to the increase of self-regulation and academic achievement. Most of the students show resistance due to the lack of basic skills in education. They do not have feelings and beliefs of success in spite of showing considerable efforts. These students have low level of self-efficacy. Teachers can encourage these students to be more active and challenge the assignments, they can also encourage these students' interest in education and strengthen and increase their self-efficacy to positively alter their situation. The results of the studies indicate that teachers can relate the new tasks to the students' latest positions and increase their level of self-efficacy and consequently self-regulation. Teachers require new strategies' training such as increase of efforts, its stability and strengthening, complementary modeling and helping the students to identify and set personal goals to increase their self-efficacy [4]. Metacognitive skills training enable the individuals to attain self-efficacy. The concept of metacognition is undeniably a constant and common concept in the realm of education and an inseparable part of learning process. Metacognition or learning how to learn was first introduced by Flavell. Since then, many studies were conducted with regard to the effects of metacognitive strategies in individuals' performance and also its relation with other features of human behavior. The results of various studies indicate the positive effect of metacognitive training and using metacognitive strategies. Researchers and professionals in the realm of education are truly interested in the kind and level of the required knowledge for learners and this itself requires the focus of educational system on metacognitive trainings to enable the learners to think independently in dealing with different issues. Metacognition plays a principal role in successful learning. The higher the metacognitive ability, the greater the possibility for success. For want of a better word, individuals should take on an active role in learning and assessing their learning. They should also employ new strategies if their used strategies have not proved to be effective. In most of the studies, it has been evidenced that individuals with more effective metacognitive skills are more successful as compared to those who have not acquired such skills. Therefore, with regard to the above-mentioned factors, the present research aims to assess the effectiveness of metacognitive skills trainings in self-efficacy amongst the trainees studying in the vocational institutes of the 6th borough of Tehran City in 2013.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research employed a semi-experimental method with pretest, posttest and control group design. Firstly the self-efficacy questionnaire was administered on the trainees studying in the vocational training centers

located in the 6th boroughs of Tehran City. A sample of 60 individuals was randomly selected from among the trainees who had scored lower than average. Secondly, they were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by Sherer *et al* (1982), and Kenly (1989) were the data gathering tools. Asghar Nezaad (2006) has reported the reliability coefficient of the general self-efficacy questionnaire using Cronbach alpha to be .83. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire using Cronbach alpha was reported to be .81. The Cronbach alpha of the other questionnaire was assessed to be .81. Obolghasemi, Pour Kord and Narimani (2009) have reported the Cronbach alpha of the questionnaire to be .85. The experimental group underwent eight 90-minute sessions of training while the control group didn't receive any intervention. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive (frequency, percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (covariance).

Results and Finding:

The results of table 1 indicates that the scores of social and general self-efficacy as well as the overall score of the self-efficacy in the experimental and control group prior to the conduction of the metacognitive skills training which are similar to one another.

Table 1: Statistical parameters of individuals' self-efficacy in the experimental and control groups prior to the intervention (pre-test)

Statistical Parameters	Experimental		Control	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
General Self-Efficacy (Pretest)	60.87	9.46	56.90	9.36
Social Self-Efficacy (Pretest)	80.10	13.05	83.07	9.88
Total Self-Efficacy	140.97	14.37	140.30	13.19

The results of table 2 indicate that the scores of general and social self-efficacy and the overall score of self-efficacy in the experimental and control groups in the post test and subsequent to the conduction of metacognitive skills training is significantly different. In a way that the means of general and social self-efficacy scores as well as the overall scores of self-efficacy of the trainees in the experimental group and in the posttest has significantly increased. However, the mean scores of general and social self-efficacy as well as the total score of the trainees' self-efficacy in the control group, in the pretest and posttest and subsequent to the conduction of metacognitive skills training do not differ and are similar to one another.

Table 2: Statistical parameters of individuals' self-efficacy in the experimental and control groups subsequent to the intervention (post-test).

Statistical Parameters	Experimental		Control	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
General Self-Efficacy (Pretest)	67.87	9.11	55.90	9.36
Social Self-Efficacy (Pretest)	102.63	11.79	82.32	9.88
Total Self-Efficacy	170.50	17.56	138.22	13.71

Analysis of the first hypothesis: metacognitive skills training will exert effect on the general self-efficacy of the students. With regard to the results of table 3 and based on covariance analysis, the effects of metacognitive skills training on general self-efficacy have been effective in the increase of the trainees' general self-efficacy ($P < 0.01$, $F = 21.22$) subsequent to the control of intervening variables. That is to say that, if the effect of pre-test is statistically controlled, there will be between-group difference subsequent to metacognitive skills training ($P < 0.01$). Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is confirmed.

Table 3: Results of covariance analysis of the effects of metacognitive skills training on trainees' general self-efficacy.

variables	SS	df	MS	F	p	Etta	Statistical power
General self-efficacy	667.194	1	667.194	8.892	.004	.135	.834
group	1592.261	1	1592.261	21.220	.000	.271	.995
error	4276.973	57	75.035				
total	236865.000	60					

Table 4: Results of covariance analysis of the effects of metacognitive skills training on trainees' social self-efficacy.

variables	SS	df	MS	F	p	Etta	Statistical power
Social self-efficacy	852.615	1	852.615	8.086	.006	.124	.798
group	6691.262	1	6691.262	63.459	.000	.527	1.000
error	6010.218	57	105.442				
total	526151.875	60					

Analysis of the second hypothesis: metacognitive skills training will exert effect on the trainees' social self-efficacy. With regard to the results of table 4 and based on covariance analysis, the effects of metacognitive skills training on social self-efficacy have been effective in the increase of the trainees' social self-efficacy

($P < 0.01$, $F = 63.45$) subsequent to the control of intervening variables. That is to say that, if the effect of pre-test is statistically controlled, there will be between-group difference subsequent to metacognitive skills training ($P < 0.01$). Therefore, the second hypothesis of the research is confirmed.

Discussion and Conclusion:

With regard to the effectiveness of metacognitive skills training in general and social self-efficacy, the research results are in line with the research results carried out by Tabatabaei and Tarkhani (2010), Zahra Kar, Reza Zadeh and Ahghar [22], Safari and Marzoughi [15], Kharazi [9], Abdous [2], Ghourchian [7], Malek Zadeh (1999) and Ababaf [1] in Iran. Moreover, the results are in harmony with Vaneshtin & Mason [12] Hium (2000) Sullivan [20] Sharaw [19], Pintrich [14] and Brown (2001) in other countries. These researchers and authors have addressed the effectiveness of the trainings in various components including the self-efficacy of the statistical sample of their research. Naghsh, Ghazi Tabatabaei and Tarkhani (2010) indicated that self-efficacy and perceived usefulness are either directly or by self-regulation related to the academic achievement. Kharazi [9] indicated that metacognitive strategies are effective in an individual's self-efficacy. Ghourchian [7] concluded that the employment of metacognitive strategies in the classroom sets the scene for scientific involvement, affective happiness, creativity, maturity and social self-responsibility, resulting in enhanced self-confidence.

In the explanation of the first hypothesis, it can be mentioned that self-efficacy is an individual's imagined expectations in a position, task or coming to a worthy conclusion which is attained through personal activities. This mental process includes goal identification, making efforts and possessing the required abilities to achieve that goal and prediction of the results. Therefore, it seems that important and principal characteristics in self-efficacy such as self-belief, self-regulation (self-inhibition, regulating the thoughts and behaviors related to the goal achievement), self-assessment, self-management (positivism, behavior control to achieve goals) and self-stimulation which are all of crucial importance. There are a number of factors which directly or non-directly influence the self-efficacy. As demonstrated by the results of this research one of these contributing factors are metacognitive skills training. Through using cognitive and psychological intervention, we can influence the individuals' self-efficacy by enhancing it. Metacognitive skills training sets the scene for scientific involvement, internal locus of control, positive attributions, higher levels of achievement motivation, creativity, constructiveness and self-responsibility in the individuals. It also enhances one's self confidence and enables the individuals to identify the problems, assess and test out their actions, act freely and independently and come up with the best possible solutions. Undoubtedly, metacognitive training can influence some components including self-efficacy. On the other hand, self-belief of abilities brings about feelings of self-efficacy and self-efficacy plays an important role in shaping the behavior. Self-belief enables perception and outcomes of possible activities. Perception of self-efficiency refers to the individual's personal wisdom control. An individual who believes to have the ability to effectively influence a specific matter can actively regulate his/her life. Bandura defined self-efficacy as an individual's judgment of his/her ability in performing a specific behavioral model. Bandura asserts that those who know how to behave in a position also know that they may not be able to appropriately behave and respond to a situation if they doubt their abilities, having the appropriate behavior, though. Adequate functioning requires not only skill but also appropriate judgment of self which is known as self-efficacy. Moreover, if the individuals have adequate skills and high self-efficacy expectations and do not consider the required outcomes for doing that behavior, they may help choosing that behavior. According to Bandura [3] self-efficacy expectations influence an individual's behavior selection in the environmental settings.

Self-efficacy is the confidence with one's abilities to control thoughts, feelings and activities. Therefore, it is effective in the individual's real performance, emotions, behavior selection and the amount of efforts devoted for an activity [3]. Self-efficacy is not instantly created but evolves during time and throughout different stages (childhood, adolescence and adulthood). Hence, the contributing factors of self-efficacy include the family roots and enhancement of self-efficacy through the transitional experience of adulthood. One's assurance about his/her abilities is effective in the emergence of behavior and confronting or avoiding it. Weak self-efficacy beliefs are easily invalidated through unsuccessful experience. However, those who have strong belief in their abilities maintain it against obstacles. The more stable the feeling of self-efficacy, the more durable it is. In the explanation of the second hypothesis it can be concluded that social self-efficacy is one of the features of self-efficacy which is influenced by various components and factors, out of which metacognitive strategies can be mentioned. As evidenced in the present study, metacognitive skills training positively influence the social aspect of the trainees' self-efficacy. Bandura [3] asserts that self-efficacy is regarded as human constructive ability by which cognitive, social, affective and behavioral skills are organized to attain various goals. According to him, the previous knowledge, skills and achievements are not suitable predictors for individuals' future performance. Human belief about his/her abilities in performing the required tasks is influential in the individual's performance. There exists significant difference between possessing various skills and the ability to adequately form them to perform the duties in different setting. Individuals know what to do and possess the necessary skills for performing them; however, they are often unsuccessful. Self-knowledge is activated through cognitive,

motivational and affective skills which are responsible for the transition of knowledge and abilities to skillful behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is not related to the possession of skill or skills but is the belief in performing the required task in different settings. Belief in efficacy is an important factor in the constructive system of human competence. Doing the duties by different people with similar skills in different settings labeled as weak, moderate or strong or by the same person in different positions is related to the changes in efficacy beliefs. Skills can easily be influenced by self-doubt. Hence, even truly talented individuals may demonstrate weak show of their abilities when they have weak beliefs about themselves. Therefore, self-efficacy beliefs enable the individuals to demonstrate the utmost level of abilities while encountering obstacles. Perceived self-efficacy is an important factor for successful performance and is regarded amongst the most principal skills. Effective performance is related to both acquiring an adequate level of skills and belief in performing those skills. Management of ambiguous, stressful and unpredictable positions requires multiple skills. The previous skills in order to respond to various demands of various situations are often organized by new methods. Hence, exchange with the environment is somewhat related to an individual's judgment of his/her abilities and that individuals consider themselves as capable of performing the duties. Perceived self-efficacy is not the criterion of having personal skills, but indicates that an individual has garnered the belief that s/he can perform a task to the best of his/her ability. An investigation into different studies done in this realm indicates that social self-efficacy is amongst the most important factors of behavior regulation which results in self-regulation and improvement of life quality. It helps the individuals confront challenging and ambiguous settings. It also provides the individuals with the opportunity to recognize their real capacities and increases the individual's acceptance and self-confidence. Moreover, the studies demonstrate that there are a number of contributing factors in to boosting the level of self-efficacy of individuals, out of which metacognitive skills and strategies training can be mentioned. In light of such skills, the decision-making skills, constructive interaction with others, planning, deep thinking, reality-based judgments, respect for conflicts of interest, self-control, self-assessment and peaceful relationship with others can be enhanced among the learners. Kadivar [8] defines metacognition as the individual's knowledge about his/her system of cognition and its control. According to Kadivar, metacognition is the cognition beyond cognition and normal thinking. Marzano [18] argues that metacognition as defined by psychologists is the knowledge about thinking activities, learning and their control or the assessment of the knowledge of oneself, cognitive processes, outcomes or their related matters. Burke [5] contends that metacognition is the individual's ability to think about his/her own thinking process, close attention to them and particularly the individual's effort for higher cognitive ability. Martinez [11] considers metacognition as a multifaceted concept which involves knowledge, belief, process and strategies that assesses, monitors and controls the cognition. Metacognitive skills training can guide individuals in the attainment of self-efficacy. The concept of metacognition is a common concept in education and its crucial role is undeniable in the process of learning. Different studies have been carried out in this realm and all of them have confirmed the positive effectiveness of metacognitive strategies, employment of metacognitive strategies in the individuals' performance and its relationship with other aspects of human behavior. The present research aimed to assess the effectiveness of metacognitive skills trainings in self-efficacy amongst the trainees studying in the vocational institutes of the 6th borough of Tehran City in 2013. It can be concluded that the trainees' self-efficacy was low prior to the metacognitive skills training. However, significant increase was observed subsequent to the training in the level of their self-efficacy. These trainees will be in great need of the acquired leanings and trainings by which they will be able to add up to their efficacy and effectiveness which will lead to the increase in their quality of life.

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