



Original Article

# The effectiveness of cognitive skills training based on stress reduction on students' night homework anxiety

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The present study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching cognitive skills based on stress reduction on students' night homework anxiety.

**Materials and Methods:** The statistical population of this study included all elementary students of the second period of Khorasan Razavi province who had homework anxiety. 24 of them (experimental and control groups) were selected by purposeful method. For data collection, the problem scale of the homework for children at the ANCCO and colleagues (HPC) was used. After performing the pre-test, the intervention of cognitive skills training was presented to the experimental group in format of eight 45 minute- sessions. At the end of the intervention, two groups were evaluated in post-test phase. Covariance analysis was used to analyze the data.

**Results:** The results show that after controlling the pre-test, the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups was significant for homework anxiety, and the mean scores of the experimental group was significantly less than the control group (0.45, ETA,  $P < 0.05$ ,  $F = 17.26$ ). The effect of this intervention on night homework anxiety is 0.45.

**Conclusion:** According to the results, it seems that the training of cognitive skills based on stress reduction is effective on students' night homework anxiety.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Cognitive skills, Homework, Stress, Students

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### Introduction

Anxiety is an adaptive excitement (1) and a mood that displays without any external stimuli and its origin is unconscious and non-inhibitory (2). This condition is an unpleasant and often obscure concern (3) often associated with symptoms of an auto device such as shortness of breath, palpitations, transpiration, headache, short stomach upset, and restlessness. Although low anxiety is necessary for human life and everyday life, high anxiety causes serious harm to the body and mind (4).

In fact, anxiety is a necessary response to stress, and it prepares a person with a risk of reaction and response when he or she comes. In many cases, such a response is logical and even vital, but its abnormal state can affect a wide range of human functions (5). Therefore, little anxiety can have a positive effect on life and development. It is natural that this type of anxiety not only has no harm to the human development process, but also is constructive and useful (6).

According to DSM-5, anxiety is a 3 to 13 percent lifelong prevalence. Anxiety Disorder is an extreme or unreasonable fear of situations where a person's behavior or performance may be evaluated (7). Among the various anxieties that humans experience in their life span, especially during formal education, can be the anxiety of the night. The night's homework defines as a set of tasks set by the teacher at the school to enable them to complete their school hours outside their school hours (8). In general, the meaning of the task of the night is all the tasks involved (writing assignments, memorable, solving, etc.) that teachers set daily for their students to do at home. Nightlife has a variety of types of exercises, preparation, expansion and creativity. According to the nature of these assignments, the effect of each of them on students' academic achievement can be

different from each other (9). The night work is always one of the factors involved the realization of learning has been prominent, and the form and type of assignment have also varied in each period in proportion to the perception that learning existed (10).

In today's world, education of people is one of the necessities of life, without the education of the continuing life of people at risk. Because education of people in need of a lot of money and budget, therefore, the purpose of educational education of students is their academic achievement (11). The pressures associated with education are the main source of stress in young people all over the world. Educational activities for children and adolescents are of great importance in most cultures, but parents' expectations, teachers and students themselves, due to competition and academic excellence, can be a source of stress and stereotyping for most students (12).

Stress reduction cognitive skills training are a multifaceted approach in which techniques such as relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing, mediation for identifying auto-negative thoughts, cognitive distortions and rebuilding it by replacing rational thoughts, effective coping training, managing anger and expressing Gray is taught to people (12). Nickeyk, Wingerhorstz and Zelenberg (13) showed that reducing stress has an effect on reducing symptoms of anxiety and increasing the positive mood and high quality of life. Due to the important role that school plays in shaping people's attitudes about their abilities and abilities, it is important to control the mental health problems of students such as stress, depression and anxiety. Meanwhile, cognitive skills training based on stress reduction and anxiety has both strong theoretical basis and several

studies have confirmed its effectiveness in reducing psychological symptoms and anxiety (14).

Cognitive Therapy is a psychotherapy system that tries to reduce self-harmful emotional and behavioral responses by making changes in defective thinking and maladaptive beliefs that underlie emotional responses. In cognitive therapy, emphasis has been placed on reducing the intensity and intensity of uncomplicated responses of caregivers and teaching modern skills in order to reduce unwanted behaviors and increase more compassionate behaviors (15).

Cognitive therapy is also a short-term treatment that is often effective in the treatment of depression (16). Cognitive therapy is based on the views that stress states like depression, anxiety and anger often persist or intensify by beneficial and extreme thinking. The role of the therapist is to help the patient to identify and correct the person's thinking through the application of logical and empirical criteria. Cognitive therapy is in fact a model for gathering and categorizing real-world information; Beck and Frillin consider cognitive therapy as depression as a redefinition of rational beliefs whose purpose is to re-energize the individual's realistic system (17).

Lin believed that cognitive skill training improves human relationships and enables individuals to act in accordance with their own interests, and allow them to express their desires without feeling anxious and stressful and honest feelings. They will show themselves in this way, which promotes their upbringing and excellence (18).

Teaching techniques and cognitive skills such as problem-solving skills will enable students to solve their problems and deal with stress and anxiety. Because anxiety and stress will lead to many psychological,

physical and social problems in the students, and if skills of coping with these factors are not given to them, they will be frustrated in society. Therefore, using the teaching of cognitive skills mentioned above, it is possible to develop students' thinking and strengthen their memory and stress and anxiety factors in them to the desirable level (19).

### **Materials and Methods**

At first, the subjects were recruited on the basis of a revised version of the Psychiatric Clinical Interview, the fifth Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for the Detection of Semi-Structured Clinical Intervention (SCID), identified by a psychologist. Students who received the lowest scores in the questionnaires selected via purposeful sampling and then the samples were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups. The both group were evaluated in pretest phase. Then, treatment interventions for reducing cognitive skills based on stress reduction were performed for 8 sessions (45 minutes) for the experimental group, but the control group did not receive any interventions. After the end of the treatment period, both groups were compared using the post-test research tools. At the end, the results of the pre-test and post-test were compared between the two groups.

#### **Research instrument**

*A) Diagnostic Interview:* The semi-structured clinical interview of SCID is based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (Fifth Edition) (DSM-V) of the American Psychiatric Association, which provides a clinical interview, in addition to facilitating the process of evaluating and verifying the reliability and validity of resources (3).

*B) The problem scale of the homework for children at the ANCCO and colleagues (HPC):* Housekeeping Home Problem List

(HPC) by Kathleen M. Ensco, Grill Scully, Rafael Ramirez and Frederic M. Levine was made in 1987, consisting of 20 items that are used to measure home-based homework problems. The implementation of the questionnaire is based on the 4-point Likert scale, which is used for "never", "sometimes", "often" and "Most often" are rated 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively. A higher overall score indicates more homework problems in children. In ANCO and colleagues' research, this scale has an excellent algebraic coefficient of 0.91. The alpha of the questionnaire in this study was 0.79.

The data were analyzed by SPSS18 software using descriptive and inferential statistics.

### Results

The mean and standard deviation of descriptive findings and repeated measures tests were used to explain the covariance test. Findings of the research were used. In order to evaluate the overall significance of the fitted model, from the effects of pylosic effects and the Lambdesa Wikis test, and the Hutchling effect and the larger of the second root, it is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Piley Effect Test, Hutchling Effect, Lamboidy Wickels, Root

	Partial $\eta^2$	F	df	Sig
Piley	0.001	0.99	3.0	0.00
Wickels	0.001	0.00	3.0	0.00
Hutchling	0.999	699.54	3.0	0.00
Root	0.999	699.54	3.0	0.000

( $P < 0.01$ )

According to the value of the Lambda test in the following table, the statistical significance of 0.01 and the significant level of zero showed that at least one of the

variables of stress and anxiety in the students' homework in the experimental and control group were significantly different in the post-test with each other.

**Table 2.** The results of single-variable covariance analysis experiment and control groups

Source of change		SS	df	MS	Partial $\eta^2$	Sig	F
Homework anxiety	Group	320.83	1	320.83	0.45	0.000	17.26
	Error	390.15	21	18.57			
	Total	30522	24				

( $P < 0.01$ )

**Table 3.** Modified mean scores of post-test anxiety variable

Dependent Variable	Group	M.M	standard error
Homework anxiety	Experimental	31.24	1.29
	Control	39.08	1.29

( $P < 0.01$ )

The results of the above tables indicate that after controlling the pre-test, the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups was significant for the anxiety variables of the night task, and the mean scores of the experimental group in the anxiety variable of the night-time was significantly less than the control group

(0.45, ETA,  $P < 0.05$ ,  $F = 17.26$ ). The effect of this intervention on the night anxiety is 0.45.

### Discussion

Based on the results of this study, and the other researchers such as Holly Onal (20), Joseph Williams (21), Kelly Hanna (22), Cocaqua et al. (23), Mobiini (24), Orly and colleagues (25), Sharma (26), Spilberger

(27), Cappadine (28), and Wolstad et al. (29), it can be argued that by training cognitive skills, people identify lower stress-related physical symptoms and decrease their emotional stress, anxiety, and stress due to educational expectations. Identifying auto-negative thoughts and cognitive distortions and replacing rational thoughts plays an important role in the correct evaluation. In this training course, people learned to have an accurate assessment of their academic abilities and talents and, based on their successes in education, have reasonable expectations. The existence of these rational expectations reduced the amount of experienced anxiety (30).

According to the Water Thumberer's theory, anxiety involves cognitive and emotional components, and cognitive components which are responsible for reducing the performance and individual's mental attitudes and emotional components which are responsible for emotional reactions to the situation (31) and also, William's view that anxiety is a response to external stimuli. So, it can be emphasized that those with anxiety at night have a kind of self-employment with a worrying mindset that they slightness and doubt about their abilities are determined and often they carry out a negative cognitive assessment, negative emotions and undesirable physiological response (32,33).

Also, people who learn coping skills instead of helplessness, passivity and mind-blowing,

will increase their abilities and reduce the requirements of stressful situations (problem-oriented strategy). Also, when people use stress management techniques to reduce stress and associated physical symptoms, control sensation increases (34). Cognitive therapy protocol for adolescents with anxious response to homework, through the training of identifying unrealistic risks, enables them to control and manage worrying thoughts, negative emotions, and adverse physiological responses (35).

In a general explanation it can be stated that cognitive stress reduction training emphasizes the collaborative relationship between the therapist and the authorities and also has the potential to reduce the full range of academic anxiety that students experience and it can be effective in improving self-efficacy beliefs that are the main problem for anxious people (16).

### **Conclusion**

According to the results, it seems that the training of cognitive skills based on stress reduction is effective on students' night homework anxiety.

### **Acknowledgement**

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