

## The Effectiveness of Psychodrama on Reducing Aggression in People with Intellectual Disabilities

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing aggression in people with intellectual disabilities. The present study was a quasi-experimental study with pre-test and post-test design with the control group that selected subjects in experimental and control groups. This study's statistical population consisted of all individuals with intellectual disabilities in 2018-19 in Tehran attending the Rehabilitation Institute for the mentally disabled in Tehran. The random sampling method was used in this study. Therefore, the lottery selected 30 males with intellectual disabilities (15 people in each group) from the statistical population. Vahedi et al.'s aggression questionnaire were one of the research instruments (2008). This study performed psychodrama on the experimental group in 10 group sessions for 45 minutes three times a week. Data were analyzed by analysis of covariance. According to findings, psychodrama effectively reduces aggression in people with intellectual disabilities ( $p < 000/1$ ). Therefore, it is concluded that theatrical performance is one of the effective factors in reducing aggression in people with intellectual disabilities.*

*Keywords: Psychodrama, Aggression, Intellectual disability*

### Introduction

It is suggested to use intellectual disability instead of mental retardation because it is less offensive for people with disabilities. Moreover, it is more relevant to current professional practices focusing on functional behaviors and contextual factors. The most ancient approach of intellectual disability definition focused on social behavior and natural pattern of behavior. The intellectual disability construct belongs to the general disability structure that has developed over the past two decades, emphasizing an ecological perspective that focuses on the individual interaction with his environment. This view also emphasizes recognizing that regular application of individual support can improve human functioning. This structure has evolved due to the growing understanding of the process of disability and its recovery. The following factors increase this understanding: research with the social approach of the disease and the widespread effect of social attitudes, roles, and social policies on people's experience of health disorders, creating ambiguity in the historical distinction between biological and social causes of disability and diagnosis the multidimensionality of human function. These factors changed the disability structure from a person-centered trait to a human phenomenon rooted in physical or social factors. These physical or social factors

lead to functional limitations both in individual functions and in performing the roles and tasks expected of an individual in the social environment that reflect disability or limitation (American Association of Intellectual Disabilities, 2010, translated by Behjoo and Delavarian, 2016). People with disabilities or intellectual disabilities are aggressive. Aggression is a behavior with a cognitive defect in evaluation and problem-solving. It is difficult for people to code the received social information and interpret the social events and intentions correctly in this behavior. On the other hand, they imagine that the behavior of others is provocative and hostile while approaching social conditions with a contradictory and hostile approach. (Muratori, Levantini, Manfredi, Ruglioni & Lambruschi, 2018).

Some social psychologists find aggression an external driver to harm others. This theory believes that different external conditions create strong motivations to commit violent behavior. In addition, the driver of aggression leads to open threats against others. This theory studies the hypotheses of aggressive failure and recognizes that failure is the stimulant driver of aggression. This driver attacks and damages various goals, especially the sources of failure. Aggression is appeared after failure according to aggressive failure theory. Aggression can also be hidden or overt, and its goal may be the person's target or someone else. Some examples of increasing hidden aggression in our country are increased depression, despair, and hopelessness among young people in society, anti-social behaviors, running away from home, addictions, suicide, and other social harms. External situations affect the prevalence of aggression more than internal tendencies. Therefore, it is concluded that the driver theory has a more positive view than the instinct theory based on the possibility of preventing this behavior (Alan Izrael, translated by Munshi Tusi, 2009).

Psychological intervention methods such as psychodrama are used in several ways to solve these people's social problems. Psychodrama is one of the valuable methods among the various rehabilitation, occupational therapy, and psychotherapy in education and training therapy. It is also a group therapy method that studies prominent personality traits, interpersonal relationships, psychological conflicts and challenges, emotional disorders with special show methods (Sharifi, Miriari, and Abbasi, 2018). When it comes to reducing mental and behavioral disorders or improving a skill, psychodrama can focus on the treatment process. This idea is definitely rejected that only ordinary people can be treated and educated in the context of psychodrama activities. On the contrary, psychodrama is effective in groups with neurodevelopmental disorders and behavioral disorders (Roy, 2012). Psychodrama can discover the factors that cause people with intellectual disabilities to fail in social relationships at different levels by creating unique situations. The present study investigates whether psychodrama effectively reduces aggression and improves people's social skills with intellectual disabilities.

### **Research method:**

The present study is quasi-experimental research in a pre-test-post-test with a control group. This study's statistical population consisted of all individuals with intellectual disabilities in 2018-19 in Tehran attending the Rehabilitation Institute for the mentally disabled in Tehran. The sampling method of this study was non-random available. Thirty people with high aggression and low social skills were selected from the statistical population and were randomly (lottery) divided into experimental and control groups (15 people in each group). Thirty people with intellectual disabilities who scored high in terms of aggression and low in terms of social skills were selected with the management of Tehran Rehabilitation Institute for the Mentally Handicapped and replaced in two equal groups of 15 experimental and control. In this study, people with IQ of 70 to 85 were studied as a sample. Then, the pre-test stage was performed so that the aggression and social skills questionnaires were administered to the experimental and control groups for the first time. Then, the researcher performed theater therapy on the experimental group in 10 group sessions for 45 minutes three times a week in the institute's class. The candidate would be removed from the research process after two sessions of absence. The control group did not receive any intervention during this period. Finally, the Social Skills and Aggression Scale was performed on the subjects as a post-test stage at the end of the intervention sessions.

### Introducing research tools:

Vahedi et al.s Child Aggression Questionnaire (2008): The instructor completed the Aggression Scale Instructor Form with 42 questions. This questionnaire evaluates the areas of relational, physical, and verbal aggression with five Likert options (never zero, rarely 1, once a month 2, once a week 3, and most days 4). The scale note fluctuates between zero and 168. According to Vahedi et al. (2008), Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.98 on the whole scale and is satisfactory in the four extracted factors. This scale factor analysis provided four factors of verbal-aggressive aggression, physical-aggressive aggression, relational aggression, and impulsive anger with principal components analysis and after Varimax rotation that reports the validity of the scale structure.

Intervention program: The researcher designed a suitable program for people with intellectual disabilities regarding their needs and special circumstances based on educational methods related to people with mental disabilities.

Table 1 presents the topics of the intervention program sessions and a summary of their content.

**Table 1: Content of psychodrama sessions**

First session	Introducing group members with each other, giving assignments on introducing yourself to others.
second session	Performing the play "Mamli, do not forget to say hello " to teach the skill of saying hello. Doing greetings exercises and getting acquainted with greeting others in different situations.
third session	Reading stories to teach the concept of empathy, doing homework to recognize your feelings
fourth session	Doing the homework to recognize the others feelings (according to behaviors, facial expressions, tone of voice)
fifth meeting	Performing the play "Two Neighboring Trees" to teach the concept of empathy. Practicing recognizing and understanding emotions and feelings in different situations.
Sixth Session	Doing the homework to recognize anger, ways to deal with and control anger. Performing exercises to reduce aggression in different situations.
Seventh session	Performing the play "Angry Boy" to teach the concept of anger, familiarity with the physical signs of anger, and its impact on social relationships.
Eighth Session	Performing the play "The crow who did not want to be himself" to teach the concept of self-acceptance and familiarity with individual and interpersonal differences and their place in social relations.
The ninth session	Performing the play, "Kaveh promises her body" to know his body parts and take care of himself. Performing exercises to get acquainted with and understand the function of body organs.
The tenth session	Performing the play "Hassani is a bunch of flowers" to teach the importance of personal hygiene. Doing exercises to observe personal hygiene and remind of its importance in social relationships.

Descriptive statistics are (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation), and inferential statistics are (analysis of covariance). Version 24 of the SPSS software was used to perform this process.

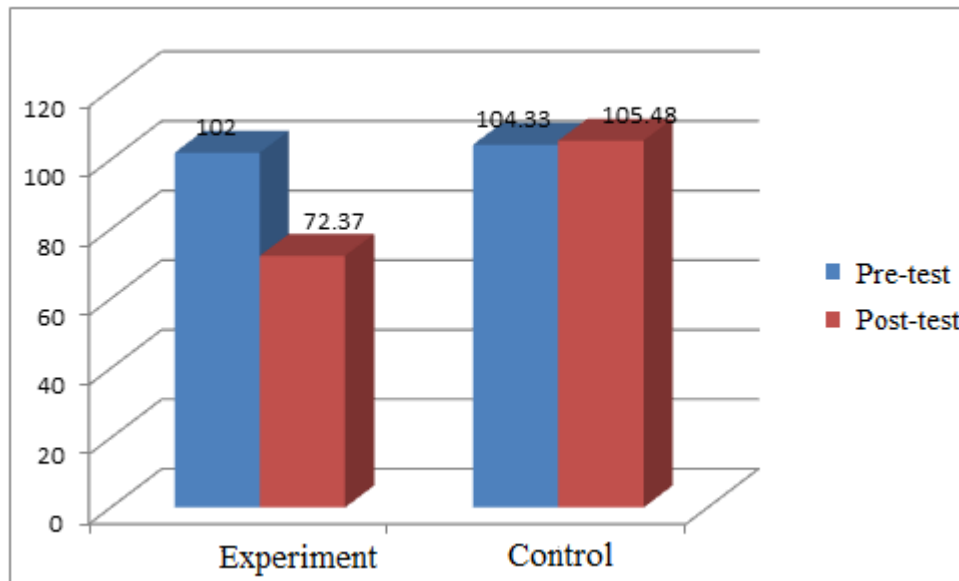
### Results:

#### Descriptive research findings:

Table 1 presents the descriptive findings of subjects' aggression and social skills scores.

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of aggression in experimental and control groups, separately in pre-test-post-test stages**

Variables	Statistical indicators	Experimental group		Control group	
		Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation
Aggression	Pre-test	102.00	12.44	104.33	13.58
	Post-test	72.37	9.11	105.48	13.22



**Figure 1- Mean score of aggression in the experimental and control groups**

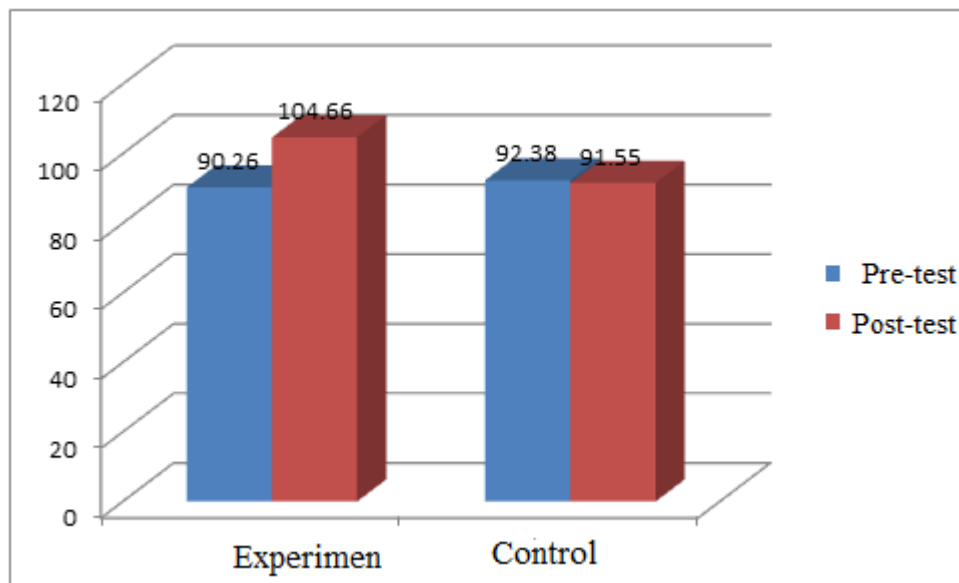


Table 1 and Figure1 show that the mean score of aggression for the experimental and control groups in the pre-test is 102.00 and 104.33, respectively. Moreover, the mean score of aggression for the experimental and control groups in the post-test is 72.37 and 105.48, respectively.

Examining the presuppositions of multivariate analysis of covariance

**Normal distribution of variables:**

**Table 3: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S)	The significance level
Aggression	0.80	0.18

Table 3 shows that the Aggression Scale data are normal and not limited to parametric tests.

**Homogeneity of variances:**

**Table 4: Levin test results**

Variable	Assessments	Levine Statistics	Degree of intergroup freedom	Degree of freedom within the group	The significance level
Aggression	pre-test	0.200	1	27	0.150
	Post-test	0.311	1	27	0.200

Table 4 shows that the Levin test confirmed the homogeneity of variance in aggression scores due to its lack of significance.

**Homogeneity of regression slopes:**

**Table 5: Results of homogeneity test of regression slopes of research variables in the post-test stage of experimental and control groups**

Sources of effect	Total squares	Freedom Degree	Average squares	F	The significance level
group	177.112	2	88.556	7.111	0.085
pre-exam	798.223	1	798.223	46.11	0.001
Group * Pre-test	1758.113	2	879.056		
Error variance	335.222	27	12.415		
Total variance	3068.670	30			

Table 5 shows that the interaction between pre-tests and post-tests at factor levels is not significant in the variables of aggression and social skills ( $0.05 < P$ ). Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes in the post-test stage is confirmed in the data.

The effect of psychodrama on reducing aggression by people with intellectual disabilities

**Table 6: Results of psychodrama of covariance analysis on aggression**

Sources of change	Total Squares SS	Degrees of freedom df	Average Squares MS	F	The significance level	Effect size $\eta^2$
aggression	1748.40	1	1748.40	89.809	0.001	0.0782
Error	486.705	25	19.468			
Total	2235.105	30				

Table 6 shows that psychodrama  $F = (1 \cdot 25) = 89.809$  was effective ( $P < 0.01$ ). The quadratic square  $\eta^2$  shows the intensity of this effect (0.782). The significance of the effect shows that psychodrama has reduced aggression in subjects.

### Discussion and conclusion:

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing aggression in people with intellectual disabilities. According to the results, psychodrama affected the aggression variable. The result is implicitly consistent with the research of Wolston Kraft (2018), Roxandra (2015), Akinsula and Adoka (2013), Fong (2007), Rajabi and Ali Moradi (2017), Qatezadeh (2013). Their studies showed that theater and psychodrama affect psychological variables such as aggression or intellectual disability. Transformation of the individual's desire to be an outlet into a constructive internalization is one of the advantages of psychodrama. In addition, behaving a particular feeling, thought, or attitude using body movements and postures presents a complete understanding of the inner world. A thought seems more real when it is embodied so that others watch it and accept it. This practical and theoretical concept plays an important role in treatment and education. Moreno calls this desire a thirst for action and believes people need to bring their reactions and needs into action rather than talk about it. People usually show immediate behavior when the thirst for performance is quenched, and outpouring needs is followed by low self-awareness. Moreno also believed that all psychological disorders could use psychodrama principles as a useful treatment method. Psychodrama is not limited only to patients but also to criminals, delinquents, ordinary people, and populations and institutions.

In addition, psychodrama can be used in educational situations, marriage counseling, problems of industrial centers, and generally for all cases of guidance and counseling. Counselors and psychotherapists are recommended to use psychodrama to reduce aggression in people with mental disabilities due to its effectiveness in reducing aggression in these people. Despite the results obtained, the present study has faced limitations, one of which can be limited in selecting only the male as the samples. The study sample only consisted of people with low intelligence, making it difficult to generalize the results to other people. In this study, the follow-up stage was not used.

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