

# The Efficacy of Psychosocial Group Training Empowerment on Altruism and Social Adjustment of Female High School Students

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The present study aimed to investigate the efficacy of Psychosocial Group Training Empowerment on altruism and social adjustment of female high school students.

**Method:** This semi-experimental study was conducted with a pre-test/post-test design and control and follow-up groups for two months. The statistical population of this study included all female high school students of Tehran city in the academic year of 2020-2021. They included 60 randomly sampled female students assigned to either an experimental group (30 students) or a group control (30 students). The experimental group underwent online group training in psychosocial empowerment (12 sessions lasting for 90 min). On the other hand, the control group received no training and remained on the waiting list. Required data were collected using a prosocial personality questionnaire and adjustment inventory. Also, data analysis was performed using SPSS-24 software in two sections: descriptive and inferential.

**Results:** Findings revealed a significant effect of group training psychosocial empowerment in post-test and follow-up on altruism and social adjustment of female high school students ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Psychosocial group empowerment training can affect the level of altruism and social adjustment of female students. Therefore, it is recommended alongside other treatments for psychosocial empowerment.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Altruism, Social Adjustment

## Introduction

Adolescence is a period with variable onset and duration between childhood and adulthood. This period can include depressive symptoms [1], sexual problems [2], harmful use of smartphones and the Internet [3], inability to regulate emotions [4], mental health problems due to age [5], frustration [6], disability in establishing relationships with friends [7], high-risk behaviors and drug abuse [8]. Compared to male adolescents, female students experience more problems such as premenstrual syndrome and emotional problems [9]. Another adolescent problem is the existence of weakness in prosocial behaviors. Altruism is necessary for group collaboration between individuals, which enriches life experience and enhances the survival of individuals [10]. Altruism is a multidimensional and multi-causal variable defined as behaviors that benefit others and are often done at the personal expense of others [11].

Altruism is a multidimensional multi-causal variable and a process by which individuals acquire beliefs, values, social norms, and practices that allow them to interact successfully with the society [12]. This successful interaction with others causes people to experience more social adjustment, defined as the interaction between the individual and his social environment [13]. Social adjustment includes the individuals' adaptation to their social environment, which may be achieved by changing themselves or the environment [14].

Adaptation is also classified based on emotional, educational, psychological, social, and moral characteristics achieved by social adjustment and is a prelude to reaching other dimensions of adaptation. In other words, adaptation is establishing a relationship between oneself and the environment and believing that people must pursue their goals according to socio-cultural frameworks [15]. Social adjustment is a product of society and is therefore influenced by the systems and cultures of its society. It is based on the need to balance the individuals' needs and desires with those of the group in which they live and to avoid confrontation with group interests and norms [16]. It can also explain behavioral and emotional problems in students [17].

Paying attention to altruism as the main component of social adjustment during adolescence will provide many desirable effects both at the individual and social levels. Therefore, today, identifying the antecedents and factors affecting altruism and social adjustment is among the priorities and concerns of researchers interested in this field [18]. Research has shown that students with lower levels of social adjustment experience higher rates of depression [19]. Many students become so anxious about social challenges that they need to adjust to their study habits and expectations to move to a higher class [20]. Psychosocial empowerment training is among the important interventions to improve students' academic, emotional, and psychological problems [21]. The existence of social relationships and having effective life skills are some major signs of mental health and the ability of people to deal with various issues and problems in life. In this regard, psychosocial empowerment is defined as a life skill that reduces problems in people's lives [22]. Based on the research background, psychosocial empowerment training has significantly affected students' attitudes toward drugs in the experimental group [23]. Research has also shown that psychosocial empowerment training promotes social adjustment. Also, the effect of training these competencies has continued after two months, and psychosocial empowerment training increased the adaptation rate [24]. Other studies have shown that psychosocial empowerment effectively reduces high-risk behaviors and increases hope in adolescent girls [25].

Accordingly, psychosocial empowerment affects some variables such as adjustment, adolescent attitudes toward drugs, high-risk behaviors, and hope. However, rare studies have explored the effect of these pieces of training on altruism and social adjustment of female high school students. Therefore, the obtained psychosocial empowerment training results can help stakeholders in this field improve altruism and increase female students' social adjustment levels. Hence, to fill the research gap, this study has answered whether Psychosocial Group Training Empowerment is effective in altruism and social adjustment of female high school students in Tehran or not.

## Method

This semi-experimental study was conducted based on a pretest-posttest design with a control group and a two-

month follow-up group. The statistical population of the study included all female second-year high school students ( $n = 125,110$ ) in Tehran in the academic year of 2020-2021. Initially, the Aggression and Social Self-Efficacy Questionnaire was administered as a pre-test to 145 female students available on the Students Social Network (Shad). Then, among this sample, 60 students were selected and randomly assigned to an experimental group (30 students) and a control group (30 students). These students had a lower than average standard deviation in socialization and social adjustment behaviors compared to other students. Informed consent to participate in the research, high school education, and female gender were the criteria for entering. On the other hand, being absent for more than two sessions and simultaneous participation in educational and psychological sessions were the other criteria for leaving the research. In this study, descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (i.e., repeated measures analysis of variance) were performed in the SPSS software version 24. In this research, the two following tools were used for data collection:

**Prosocial Personality Questionnaire:** This questionnaire, designed by Penner (2002), consists of 30 questions with two oriented empathy subscales (social responsibility with seven questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; empathetic relationship with questions 9, 11, 13 and 15; looking from the perspective of others (social perspective) with questions 8, 10, 12, 16 and 18; oriented moral reasoning of others with questions 20, 23 and 25; reciprocal moral reasoning with questions 21, 22 and 24) and help (personal distress with questions 14, 17 and 19; altruism with questions 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30) [26]. The questionnaire's items for questions 1 to 25 in the 5-point Likert scale were scored as follows: I completely disagree (=1), I disagree (= 2), I have no idea (= 3), I agree (= 4), and I completely agree (= 5). In addition, items 26 to 30 were scored as follows: never (= 1), once (= 2), more than once (= 3), often (= 4), and more often (= 5) [27]. The total score of the questionnaire is in the range of 30 to 150. A higher score means having more community-friendly behaviors. In Iran, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.87 [28]. In another study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.70 [29]. Moreover, in a previous study [26], Factor Analysis (FA) was used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the obtained results, Cronbach's coefficient was 0.80, and the retest coefficient was in the range of 0.77 to 0.85 and significant at 0.01 [26]. In the present study, the internal consistency method was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, and its Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.91.

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reasoning with questions 21, 22 and 24) and help (personal distress with questions 14, 17 and 19; altruism with questions 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30) [26]. The questionnaire's items for questions 1 to 25 in the 5-point Likert scale were scored as follows: I completely disagree (=1), I disagree (= 2), I have no idea (= 3), I agree (= 4), and I completely agree (= 5). In addition, items 26 to 30 were scored as follows: never (= 1), once (= 2), more than once (= 3), often (= 4), and more often (= 5) [27]. The total score of the questionnaire is in the range of 30 to 150. A higher score means having more community-friendly behaviors. In Iran, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.87 [28]. In another study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.70 [29]. Moreover, in a previous study [26], Factor Analysis (FA) was used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the obtained results, Cronbach's coefficient was 0.80, and the retest coefficient was in the range of 0.77 to 0.85 and significant at 0.01 [26]. In the present study, the internal consistency method was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, and its Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.91.

**Adjustment Inventory for School Students:** This inventory (Sinha and Singh 1993), is valid for people aged 14 to 18 years [30]. The tool contains 60 questions and measures three components of emotional, social, and academic adjustment. A score of 0 is considered for responses indicative of adjustment and a score of 2 for responses indicative of non-adjustment [31]. Scores range

from 0 to 120, with the low scores indicating a higher adjustment and vice versa [32]. In Iran, to check the reliability of the inventory, the Split-Half method was used. The correlation coefficients for emotional adjustment, social adjustment, academic adjustment, and the whole questionnaire were 0.81, 0.84, 0.78, and 0.79, respectively [33]. In a previous study [34], the factor validity of the inventory and model fit for the cryptographic index was 0.03, while its reliability was calculated with Cronbach's alpha to be 0.92 [35]. In another study, the reliability of this tool has been calculated to be 0.95 using the Split-Half method, 0.93 by the retest method, and 0.94 by the Kuder-Richardson method [36]. In the present study, the internal consistency method was used to evaluate the reliability of the inventory, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.82.

Table 1 presents the psychosocial empowerment training sessions adapted from previous research [22, 37-39]. The process of psychosocial empowerment training sessions was as follows: the experimental group received psychosocial group training empowerment in 12 sessions, each session lasting for 90 min (one session per week on Sundays). During this period, the control group did not receive any intervention from anger management training and group training in psychosocial empowerment and remained on the waiting list. The Student Social Network (Shad) program provided these weekly sessions to students.

**Table 1. Group Training Psycho-Social Empowerment**

session	Purpose of the session	Content of the session
1	Introducing the members to each other and explain the goals of the sessions	Introducing the members to each other and expressing the rules of the group and getting acquainted with the psycho-social empowerment training program by the students
2	Empowering the growth of personal mastery: self-actualization	Focusing on basic life competencies and skills beyond existing needs, teaching assertiveness techniques to achieve their goals through role-playing, facilitating adaptive behaviors in individuals, Improve individuals' ability to achieve a more productive life instead of simply addressing existing problems (emphasis on personal growth).
3	Training to deal with negative emotions	Reviewing the previous session, not denying the reality and being ready to face the current situation. Physical, mental, emotional, psychological and behavioral warning signs and deep breathing exercises, mental imagery and muscle relaxation that are used as long-term ways to deal with stress, negative emotions and anxiety.
4	Training the creative and critical thinking	Combining decision-making power and problem solving to achieve creative thinking, Looking beyond her own experiences, Ability to focus and pay attention to issues in the long run, Resisting problems, High strength and willingness to work hard, and Commitment to do Correct work.
5	Self-esteem training	The educational goal of this session will be to understand the importance and role of self-esteem in life, increase the feeling of success in life, self-satisfaction and recognize her strengths and weaknesses. Teaching techniques and steps to increase self-esteem and overcome feelings of futility.
6	Qualitative world training	Introducing the quality world and identifying the desired world of students, examining the gap between the quality world (what we want) and the real world (what we have) and the consequences of anxiety, depression and anger resulting from it
7	Self-efficacy training	Examining the role of self-efficacy in life, defining self-efficacy, stages of self-efficacy development, helping participants to identify their own abilities..
8	Self-awareness and empathy	Recognizing their physical characteristics, their own abilities and skills, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, thoughts, values, and beliefs.
9	Empowering and facilitating the decision-making process	Review previous sessions, types of emotional decision-making, avoidance, impulsive, obedient decision-making, listening decision-making, ethical decision-making, rational decision-making. Choosing the best and most logical decision-making.
10	Effective communication methods	Introduction, initial communication, familiarity with the principles, rules and objectives of meetings, the concept of communication, verbal and non-verbal elements of communication, active listening, questioning and its objectives, open and closed questioning, feedback, effective communication barriers, healthy and unhealthy communication styles.
11	Empowerment and problem solving skills training	Effective confrontation with problems and issues and solving or coping with it, awareness of feelings and thoughts, defining and identifying the problem, using problem-solving skills, paying attention to emotions, avoiding prejudice, mental fatigue.
12	Summary of contents	Execution of post-test. Members were asked to apply psychosocial skills in their lives, and all members were thanked for participating in the study, and a follow-up time was set.

## Results

The results of demographic findings showed that the ages of the psychosocial empowerment group and control group were  $16.40 \pm 0.770$  and  $16.47 \pm 0.776$ , respectively. Based on the results of the independent t-test, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of age (Sig. = 0.740 and t-test = -0.334), which indicates that the two groups are similar in terms of age. Table 2 shows the descriptive findings of the dependent variables.

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the dimensions of altruism social adjustment in the experimental and control groups in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up in the study sample. The following are the results of repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA). To use the inferential statistics of repeated measure ANOVA, we examined the assumptions of this analysis. The normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilkes test. The results showed the normality of the dependent variables. Also, the hypothesis of homogeneity of variances (post-test) was checked by the Levin test and was confirmed in the post-test ( $P < 0.5$ ). The Box test results to examine the other premise of this test, i.e., variance-covariance equality, were not statistically significant. Therefore, it establishes the assumption of the

equality of variance and covariance matrices. In addition, Mauchly's sphericity test obtained a significant level of value for altruism and social adjustment equal to 0.001. Therefore, the sphericity assumption is rejected. As a result, the assumption that the variances were the same and, more precisely, the homogeneity condition of the covariance matrix was not confirmed. Accordingly, the statistical pattern F has been violated.

Finally, an alternative test (the conservative Greenhouse-Geisser) was used to evaluate the inpatient effects of treatment. The results are shown in Table 4. Table 4 shows that group training in psychosocial empowerment has significantly affected the three stages of measurement in altruism and social adjustment.

Table 5 compares the average adjustment of test stages (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up) of altruism and social adjustment. According to Table 5, the difference between the mean of pre-test and post-test and between the mean of pre-test and follow-up is more significant than the difference between the mean of post-test and follow-up. Therefore, it is inferred that psychosocial group training empowerment has affected altruism and social adjustment in the post-test phase, and this significant effect has continued in the follow-up phase.

**Table 2.** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Age of Sample

Group	Descriptive statistics		Statistics	
			t-test	p
Psychosocial empowerment group	M	16.40	-0.33	0.740
	SD	0.77		
Control group	M	16.47		
	SD	0.77		

**Table 3.** Mean, Standard Deviation and Shapiro-Wilk test of Research Variables

Dependent variables	Assessment step	Empowerment group				Control group			
		M	SD	S-W	P	M	SD	S-W	P
Oriented empathy	Pretest	15.27	0.74	0.75	0.080	15.23	0.77	0.21	0.071
	Posttest	20.27	1.87	0.98	0.821	15.33	0.75	0.27	0.073
	Follow up	20.00	1.65	0.57	0.751	15.37	0.71	0.27	0.231
Empathetic communication	pretest	12.00	0.74	0.65	0.180	12.00	0.44	0.69	0.082
	Posttest	15.07	2.66	0.87	0.621	12.07	0.74	0.78	0.168
	Follow up	15.03	2.69	0.76	0.066	12.07	0.74	0.80	0.126
Look from the perspective of others	pretest	17.40	0.81	0.68	0.071	17.37	0.80	0.80	0.212
	Posttest	20.53	0.93	0.43	0.221	17.4	0.93	0.81	0.171
	Follow up	20.37	1.06	0.77	0.151	17.50	1.00	0.81	0.205
Oriented moral reasoning	pretest	7.93	0.74	0.65	0.080	7.90	0.75	0.72	0.213
	Posttest	10.90	0.80	0.98	0.221	8.00	0.69	0.73	0.158
	Follow up	10.77	1.00	0.67	0.65	8.07	0.78	0.46	0.651
Reciprocity moral reasoning	pretest	7.97	0.80	0.75	0.181	7.97	0.85	0.91	0.175
	Posttest	10.93	0.78	0.87	0.721	8.07	0.78	0.94	0.448
	Follow up	10.83	1.02	0.92	0.205	8.17	0.95	0.91	0.165
Help	pretest	8.00	0.78	0.82	0.213	8.07	0.98	0.95	0.565
	Posttest	10.93	1.01	0.85	0.150	8.20	0.99	0.92	0.205
	Follow up	10.90	1.21	0.96	0.692	8.33	1.18	0.92	0.213
Altruism	pretest	17.53	0.93	0.83	0.321	17.30	0.79	0.85	0.058
	Posttest	20.60	1.00	0.42	0.052	17.43	0.93	0.96	0.692
	Follow up	20.43	1.13	0.18	0.055	17.43	1.00	0.93	0.348
Social adjustment	pretest	17.53	0.93	0.18	0.061	17.43	0.81	0.45	0.051
	Posttest	12.37	1.09	0.18	0.052	17.23	1.04	0.18	0.055
	Follow up	12.50	1.04	0.15	0.062	17.30	1.08	0.18	0.061

**Table 4.** Results of Analysis of Variance for Repeated Measurement of Altruism and social Adjustment

	Sources of change	SS	F	P	Partial eta	Observed-power
Oriented empathy	Time	245.24	203.35	0.001	0.77	0.99
	Time* Group	223.55	185.37	0.001	0.76	0.99
	Group	50.00	171.35	0.001	0.74	0.99
Empathetic communication	Time	95.51	39.35	0.001	0.40	0.99
	Time* Group	88.43	36.05	0.001	0.38	0.99
	Group	178.00	30.60	0.001	0.34	0.99
Look from the perspective of others	Time	69.90	128.72	0.001	0.68	0.99
	Time* Group	60.11	110.68	0.001	0.65	0.99
	Group	178.00	97.10	0.001	0.62	0.99
Oriented moral reasoning	Time	70.35	146.48	0.001	0.71	0.99
	Time* Group	58.73	122.29	0.001	0.67	0.99
	Group	158.67	121.00	0.001	0.67	0.99
Reciprocity moral reasoning	Time	67.69	149.66	0.001	0.72	0.99
	Time* Group	55.31	122.29	0.001	0.67	0.99
	Group	153.08	92.92	0.001	0.61	0.99
Help	Time	69.20	127.81	0.001	0.68	0.99
	Time* Group	52.68	97.31	0.001	0.62	0.99
	Group	136.93	55.23	0.001	0.48	0.99
Altruism	Time	66.61	123.03	0.001	0.68	0.99
	Time* Group	55.72	102.92	0.001	0.64	0.99
	Group	204.80	99.67	0.001	0.63	0.99
Social adjustment	Time	231.32	270.32	0.001	0.82	0.99
	Time* Group	202.78	236.96	0.001	0.80	0.99
	Group	457.60	226.09	0.001	0.79	0.99

**Table 5.** Results of Bonferroni Post Hoc Test for Pre-test, Post-test and Follow-up of Altruism and Social Adjustment

Dependent variables	Assessment step	Adjusted mean	Step differences	Mean difference	P
Oriented empathy	Pretest	15.25	Pretest- Posttest	-2.55*	0.001
	Posttest	17.80	Pretest- Follow up	-2.63*	0.001
	Follow-up	17.88	Posttest- Follow up	-0.08	0.288
Empathetic communication	Pretest	12.00	Pretest- Posttest	-1.56*	0.001
	Posttest	13.57	Pretest- Follow up	-1.55*	0.001
	Follow-up	13.55	Posttest- Follow up	0.01	0.964
Look from the perspective of others	Pretest	17.38	Pretest- Posttest	-1.61*	0.001
	Posttest	19.00	Pretest- Follow up	-1.55*	0.001
	Follow-up	18.93	Posttest- Follow up	0.06	0.999
Oriented moral reasoning	Pretest	7.92	Pretest- Posttest	-1.53*	0.001
	Posttest	9.45	Pretest- Follow up	-1.50*	0.001
	Follow-up	9.42	Posttest- Follow up	0.03	0.999
reciprocity moral reasoning	Pretest	7.97	Pretest- Posttest	-1.53*	0.001
	Posttest	9.50	Pretest- Follow up	-1.53*	0.001
	Follow-up	9.50	Posttest- Follow up	0.001	0.999
help	Pretest	8.03	Pretest- Posttest	-1.53*	0.001
	Posttest	9.57	Pretest- Follow up	-1.58*	0.001
	Follow-up	9.62	Posttest- Follow up	-0.05	0.999
Altruism	Pretest	17.42	Pretest- Posttest	-1.60*	0.001
	Posttest	19.12	Pretest- Follow up	-1.51*	0.001
	Follow-up	18.93	Posttest- Follow up	0.08	0.760
Social adjustment	Pretest	17.48	Pretest- Posttest	2.68*	0.001
	Posttest	14.80	Pretest- Follow up	2.58*	0.001
	Follow-up	14.90	Posttest- Follow up	-0.10	0.255

\* At the level of 0.05 is significant.

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of group training in psychosocial empowerment on altruism and social adjustment of female high school students in Tehran. The results showed that group training in psychosocial empowerment has a significant effect on altruism, which continued in the follow-up phase. This result is consistent with those of previous research. Previous research has shown that psychosocial

empowerment training is effective on adolescents' cognitive and emotional attitudes [23]. Also, it was reported that teaching effective communication and courage skills is effective in social adjustment [24]. According to another study, psychosocial empowerment training is effective in reducing drug use in adolescents [21], and psychosocial empowerment training reduces risky behaviors in female adolescents and has a positive effect on their hope [25]. All of these results are consistent

with those of the present study. Explaining the effectiveness of group psychosocial empowerment training on altruism, it can be stated that psychosocial empowerment helps adolescents to have better social relationships with others and to have more joint activities and group cohesion with their peers. As a result, it becomes the motivating force of social behaviors and behaviors that will lead to group cohesion and the improvement of altruism [40]. Psychosocial empowerment refers to the process by which individuals are psychologically and socially empowered to organize their individual, family, and social lives. Accordingly, individuals achieve empowerment in choice, control over life, decision-making ability, and life skills. The outcome of such an intervention is improved social functions and responsibility and the ability to deal with anxiety and environmental stressors. Overall, altruism is empathetic behaviors toward others and responsible behaviors in the community and in dealing with others. Therefore, psychosocial empowerment by teaching empathy and effective relationships with others increases students' altruism rate.

Also, an explanation for the effectiveness of psychosocial empowerment group training on social adjustment is that empowerment is the process of empowering people to help them improve their sense of ability and adequacy and overcome the feeling of inability and helplessness, i.e., mobilizing inner motivations. Psychosocial empowerment encourages people to be more involved in making decisions that affect their activities, thus providing opportunities to present and implement their ideas [41]. It can also be stated that since social adjustment involves the individuals' adaptation to their social environment, this adaptation may be achieved by changing oneself or the environment. Hence, training psychosocial competence increases students' social adjustment by focusing on the basic competencies and skills of life beyond the existing needs, teaching techniques of assertiveness or courage to achieve their goals through role-playing methods, facilitating the development of adaptive behaviors in individuals, and promoting people's ability to achieve a more effective life instead of simply addressing existing problems (emphasis on personal growth).

Since this study was performed on female students in Tehran, in generalizing the results of this study to students in other cities, researchers and users should exercise the necessary caution regarding cultural, ethnic, and social differences. Concomitant research with the COVID-19 epidemic has been another limitation of the present study as it made it difficult to gather information. This research has been carried out only on high school girls, and its generalizability to girls of other educational levels and boys is limited. Similar research should be conducted in other cities and cultures on girls and male students so that the research results can be compared. In addition to using self-report tools that are likely to be biased, it is suggested to apply other research methods such as interviewing and observation to measure this variable to minimize bias. Counselors and psychologists are recommended to use

the psychosocial empowerment training to improve altruism and social adjustment of students in schools by holding workshops and psychosocial empowerment training sessions.

## Conclusion

This study showed that psychosocial group training empowerment in post-test and follow-up significantly affected the altruism and social adjustment of female high school students. It is concluded that psychosocial group training empowerment can affect the level of altruism and social adjustment of female students and is recommended alongside other treatments.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## Ethical Approval

All ethical principles were considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University of Shahrekord (Code: IR.IAU.SHK.REC.1399.064). All participants read and signed the informed consent.

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