PROPOSED PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING PROGRAM TO DEVELOP SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG SHY STUDENTS IN ENGAGING IN SPORTS ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine its various aspects and delve into its components to find ways to help students break free from the social isolation induced by their shyness, leading to genuine interactions with others. This can be achieved by developing solutions, including the use of a scale for measuring shyness and social support, aiming to encourage students to engage with their peers and develop a healthier, more confident approach to social interactions. The research problem lies in understanding the type of shyness experienced by the selected group of students and how to overcome it when engaging in sports activities. Since there is no established scale for measuring shyness related to these activities, the researcher intends to use an existing shyness scale and develop a psychological counseling program to address this issue. The research population was defined as first-year students at the College of Physical Education and Sports Science at the University of Kufa, totaling 85 students. The comprehensive sampling method was used to select the sample. The researcher determined the exploratory sample of 10 students, the sample for the scale preparation of 75 students, and the main experiment sample of 30 students, with 15 students in both the control and experimental groups. After applying the scale and collecting information, the data was processed statistically to reach the most important results, in light of which the most important conclusions were built, including:

1. *The counseling program had a positive effect on the development of social support according to the sessions included for shy students.*

2. *The prepared counseling program effectively addressed the psychological problems faced by students, particularly in the therapeutic aspect for shy first-year students.*

KEYWORDS: *Psychological Social Support, and sports activities.*

INTRODUCTION:

University education is considered one of the most important stages of education, as it represents the peak of the academic educational pyramid. Universities are influential institutions in preparing university youth to achieve positive interactions with the society they live in. Any development or advancement in the society's movement or an update of its values and concepts cannot be effective if it is not represented by students especially university students who interact with it and contribute to its leadership. Therefore, universities must work to create suitable environments and provide opportunities and activities (physical, mental, emotional, national, and social), equipping students with skills and experiences that will make them valuable citizens in society. It is likely that university students are more vulnerable to psychological and social problems when compared to individuals of the same age group. This stage is crucial for determining life goals and striving toward achieving them, as it is also a stage of seeking the philosophy of life, as well as independence and individuality. Failure to achieve this may lead to many psychological problems such as increased anxiety. Instead of representing a support force for their community, university youth find themselves in desperate need of support to avoid falling into despair.[1]

Shyness, in its psychological sense, is considered a transient crisis that can affect all individuals, regardless of gender or age. Humans experience shyness at different stages of life and in various situations, making it an inherent characteristic that everyone encounters at some point. However, it is abnormal when shyness becomes a permanent trait or characteristic.

Psychologists emphasize that shyness can only occur in the presence of specific individuals or groups, where their attention is directed toward the person, triggering the feeling of shyness. Researchers believe that many of the learning difficulties faced by students are related to their social and behavioral skills. Studies have shown that a lack of social skills in students can lead to academic inefficiency, poor achievement, and a low self-concept.[2]

The researcher studied the topic from various aspects and found it necessary to explore it due to its evident importance in the present time. The study focuses on the benefits that could directly impact students, particularly university students, and specifically those at the University of Kufa. The study aims to examine its various aspects and delve into its components to find ways to help students break free from the social isolation induced by their shyness, leading to genuine interactions with others. This can be achieved by developing solutions, including the use of a scale for measuring shyness and social support, aiming to encourage students to engage with their peers and develop a healthier, more confident approach to social interactions.

1-2 Problem of the Research:

The process of optimizing time and effort, as well as the significant development based on sound scientific principles, are among the key areas pursued by psychologists and those interested in human psychological fields. The role of scientific research is immense in addressing the psychological issues faced by individuals, particularly students. The researcher explored several studies and conducted in-depth investigations to uncover potential solutions for these challenges, which might help shy students overcome their issues. The research problem lies in understanding the type of shyness experienced by the selected group of students and how to overcome it when engaging in sports activities. Since there is no established scale for measuring shyness related to these activities, the researcher intends to use an existing shyness scale and develop a psychological counseling program to address this issue.

1-3 Research Objectives:

1. To prepare a psychological counseling program aimed at developing social support for shy students in the first stage of the Faculty of Physical Education, University of Kufa.
2. To examine social support for shy students through the development of a scale.
3. To determine the effect of the psychological counseling program and social support on shy students' engagement in sports activities.

1-4 Research Domains:

- **Human Domain:** Students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science, University of Kufa, first stage.
- **Time Domain:** From 1st October 2023 to 1st April 2024.
- **Spatial Domain:** The classrooms of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science, University of Kufa.

3-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The experimental methodology was adopted using the control and experimental group design, as it is suitable for the nature of the research.

3-1 Research Population

The research population was defined as first-year students at the College of Physical Education and Sports Science at the University of Kufa, totaling 85 students. The comprehensive sampling method was used to select the sample. The

researcher determined the exploratory sample of 10 students, the sample for the scale preparation of 75 students, and the main experiment sample of 30 students, with 15 students in both the control and experimental groups.

3-2 Tools and Equipment Used

1. Interview
2. Observation
3. Questionnaire
4. Arabic and foreign scientific references
5. Similar studies and research
6. Internet resources
7. Data collection and processing forms
8. Electronic calculator (computer)
9. Statistical tools

The researcher used the pre-prepared scale for shyness symptoms by (Maysa Al-Nayal and Medhat Abu Zaid), which consists of 40 items, scored from 0 to 4. It was presented to experts and specialists for review after necessary modifications and deletions.

3-3 Steps for Building the Guidance Program.

After reviewing the relevant literature and sources related to the research topic, it was proven that social support can be developed through psychological guidance programs. These programs were studied and planned with new scientific approaches. The researcher identified the (planning, programming, budgeting) model as the system for planning the current guidance program. This type of method is effective in planning as it aims for maximum effectiveness and benefit with minimal costs.

The researcher used group counseling for the following reasons:
• It is used to influence the group.
• It is efficient in effort.
• It helps the counselee identify new patterns of behavior that align with their interests and desires.
• It helps individuals understand themselves and achieve self-compatibility, providing a sense of security.

The researcher also relied on the Reality Therapy Theory for the following reasons:
• It can be used in group counseling.
• The counselor plays a significant role in this method, which can be easily applied.
• It is a cognitive method based on verbal communication.
• It can be used with different groups of individuals.

3-4 Steps in Planning the Guidance Program.

First: Identifying Needs:
A list of problems was presented that could potentially be influenced by the program in developing social support, which was reviewed by experts and specialists in the field of guidance and psychological counseling. Twelve psychological needs were identified as the topics for the guidance sessions, which are as follows:

1. Introduction and building counseling relationships.
2. Positive thinking.
3. Mental skills (mental imagery).
4. Self-esteem in disabled athletes.
5. Social belonging.
6. Life satisfaction and positive motivation.
7. Cohesion, loyalty, and social belonging.
8. Social commitment.
9. Closing session.

3-5 Building the Initial Guidance Program

The guidance program was built based on several theoretical foundations, specifically relying on reality therapy theories. The researcher followed the previous steps to prepare the guidance program in its initial form. The program is based on clear, precise, comprehensive methods and efficient use of effort, drawing on theories that address the variables in previous studies related to the research topic in preparation for the contents of the guidance sessions. The initial program was designed and then presented to a group of experts and judges for feedback on:

1. The suitability of the program for developing social support.
2. The appropriateness of using reality therapy counseling.
3. The suitability of the number of 12 guidance sessions.
4. The suitability of the time allocated, which is approximately 35 minutes per session.
5. Any modifications they suggested to improve the guidance program.

Based on the feedback from the experts and judges, the following was concluded:
• The suitability of the prepared guidance program.
• The adequacy of the time and number of sessions used.

3-6 Planning the Implementation of Guidance Sessions

After reviewing the content of the guidance sessions with experts and incorporating their additions and modifications to some items, the final version of the program was prepared for application to the research sample. The following basic steps were followed for the guidance program implementation:

1. One of the essential steps in executing the program was preparing the suitable place for implementation. The indoor hall was chosen for this purpose.
2. The timing and days of the sessions were set to Sundays and Wednesdays, which aligned with the training schedules of the research sample.
3. A set of materials for the program was prepared.

3-7 Main Experiment
After the program was finalized regarding priorities and needs, the researcher began implementing it on the sample of 15 students who represented the preparatory group to complete its preparation for the post-test.

3-7-1 Pre-Test:
"In experimental research, performance is measured before starting the experiment to determine the baseline level of performance, which is called a pre-test. Then, the independent variable is applied to the sample, and after a period of learning or training, the test is conducted again under the same conditions, known as the post-test. The difference between pre-test and post-test scores (dependent variable) is due to the use of the independent variable (e.g., the guidance program). Therefore, improvement is measured by calculating the difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

The pre-test was conducted on the research sample by distributing the social support measurement questionnaire on Tuesday, September 29, 2023, in the sports hall.

3-7-2 Application of the Guidance Program:
1. The researcher chose to implement the guidance program on the sample (first-year students) using group counseling due to time constraints, shared problems, similar ages, and the interaction that occurred between the counselor and counselee.
2. The researcher invited a group of experts in guidance and psychological counseling to participate in the sessions.
3. The guidance program was structured with 12 sessions, each lasting 35 minutes.
4. The sessions were held on Sundays and Wednesdays, with the first session on Sunday, October 18, 2023, and the last session on Wednesday, November 25, 2023.

3-7-3 Post-Test:
After completing the guidance sessions, the researcher conducted the post-test on the experimental and control groups by distributing the social support measurement questionnaire on Sunday, November 29, 2023. The researcher ensured that the post-test was conducted under the same conditions as the pre-test (same location and time) for both groups. Subsequently, the pre-test and post-test results for both groups were compared.

3-8 Statistical Methods
To achieve the research objectives, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate the results according to the statistical methods.

4-RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4-1 Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Results of the Research Groups in the Pre- and Post-tests in Social Support.
After analyzing the results of the research using the available computer system, the researcher concluded the following:

4-1-1 Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Results of the Control Group in the Pre- and Post-tests in Social Support. After analyzing the results, the researcher concluded the following:

Table 1. Shows the mean, standard deviation, and the calculated t-value between the pre- and post-tests of the control group in social support

Skills	Unit of Measurement	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	t-value	Sig	Significance
Social Support	Degree	60.85	9.78	61.742	8.654	5.01	0.000	Significant

The mean of the social support scale in the pre-test was 60.85, with a standard deviation of 9.87, and in the post-test, the mean was 68.74, with a standard deviation of 8.65. The sig value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating significant differences between the pre- and post-tests.

4-1-1-1 Discussion of the Results of the Control Group in the Pre- and Post-tests in Social Support. According to the results obtained by the researcher, Table (1) shows that there were no significant differences between the pre- and post-tests for the control group. The researcher attributes these differences to random variations in measuring the level of social support between the pre- and post-tests for this group. This indicates a general decline in social support among the sample's individuals.[3] The researcher attributes this decline to the individual's need for love and belonging to a group to overcome feelings of alienation, isolation, and social rejection. This need leads to seeking support and feeling trust and safety with others. If the individual fails to meet their needs for security, they cannot satisfy their needs for love and care from others, which results from weak relationships and social bonds within families and social institutions. This makes the individual feel socially isolated and alienated, with reduced family and social cohesion, which negatively affects their performance, both technically and physically, as well as their personal nature.[4]

4-1-2 Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Results of the Experimental Group in the Pre- and Post-tests in Social Support.

Table 2. Shows the mean, standard deviation, and the calculated t-value between the pre- and post-tests of the experimental group in social support
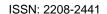
Skills	Unit of Measurement	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	t-value	Sig	Significance
Social Support	Degree	61.28	9.478	69.325	8.462	7.32	0.000	Significant

The mean of social support in the pre-test for the experimental group was 61.28, with a standard deviation of 9.48. In the post-test, the mean was 69.33, with a standard deviation of 8.46. The sig value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating significant differences between the pre- and post-tests in favor of the post-test.

4-1-2-1 Discussion of the Results of the Experimental Group in the Pre- and Post-tests in Social Support. Based on the data presented in Table (2) for the research sample of the experimental group, it was shown that there were significant differences in social support between the pre- and post-tests for this group, with the post-test showing better results. The researcher attributes this improvement to the effectiveness of the counseling program through techniques and strategies used, such as dialogue, discussion, and reinforcement. These strategies positively impacted the improvement in the social support level of the shy students, leading to their satisfaction with their lives, self-acceptance, and appreciation. [5]This, in turn, reflected positively through feelings of joy, enjoyment, and happiness. Researchers in the field of happiness emphasize the importance of raising the level of happiness in societies, as happiness enhances an individual's attention to work, love for life, satisfaction with it, tolerance of external frustrations, perseverance, and a desire to make others happy. Happy individuals tend to deal positively with embarrassing situations, overcoming the frustrations caused by such situations and handling them in a positive manner. Happy people also possess better cognitive thinking abilities, enabling them to evaluate situations more positively and feel more satisfied with their lives in a comprehensive way, which enhances their quality of life.[6]

4-1-3 Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Results of Both Research Groups in the Post-tests in Social Support.

Table 3. Shows the mean, standard deviation, and the calculated t-value between the experimental and control groups in the post-tests in social support.

Skills	Unit of Measurement	Control Group Mean	Control Group SD	Experimental Group Mean	Experimental Group SD	t-value	Sig	Significance
Social Support	Degree	61.742	8.654	69.325	8.462	3.55	0.000	Significant

The mean of social support in the post-test for the control group was 61.74, with a standard deviation of 8.65, while for the experimental group, it was 69.325, with a standard deviation of 8.46. The sig value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating significant differences between the groups in favor of the experimental group.

4-1-3-1 Discussion of the Results of the Control and Experimental Groups in the Post-tests in Social Support. According to the data presented in Table (3) for the research sample of both the control and experimental groups in the post-tests, it shows significant differences in social support levels.[7] The researcher attributes this difference to the role of the counseling program, which contributed to identifying and diagnosing the problems faced by the students, establishing important scientific, psychological, and human principles for behavior modification, and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones regarding the activity practiced and athletic performance. The psychological counseling services play a crucial role in meeting the counseling needs of students, as evidenced by the results of this study, which highlight the importance of continuous counseling throughout the preparation phases, rather than limiting it to sports teams, and ensuring that the counselor maintains full communication with all students to contribute to improving their performance.[8]

4-CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4-1 Conclusions
1. The counseling program had a positive effect on the development of social support according to the sessions included for shy students.
2. The prepared counseling program effectively addressed the psychological problems faced by students, particularly in the therapeutic aspect for shy first-year students.

4-2 Recommendations
1. The use of counseling programs should be adopted in facilitating the work plans of researchers and trainers to build and prepare special programs that focus on psychological preparation for all age groups.
2. Investigating the causes and sources of psychological problems in alignment with the academic environment of students and its specificities during the planning phase of building counseling programs and setting their scientific priorities.
3. Planning counseling programs by those interested in physical education and psychology to assist shy students who suffer from psychological disorders due to a lack of adaptation and social support, whether from their family or peers.
4. Emphasizing the role of the psychological counselor and their presence in caring for and providing support to solve and treat psychological problems in general.

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