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Determining the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Behavioral Problems and Resilience of Working Children in Karaj City in Iran: A Case Study of Boys between 7 and 13 Years Old

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ABSTRACT

Background and Aim: The present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of life skills education on behavioral problems and resilience in working children in Karaj City, Iran. **Research Methods:** This study employs a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test-post-test approach involving two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each comprising 15 participants. The target population of the study consisted of male working children aged 7 to 13 years in Karaj who had social work files in child labor care centers during the 2023-2024 academic year. The sampling method used was census sampling. The research instruments included the Achenbach Teacher Report Form (2001) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003) (CD-RIS). The life skills education program consisted of 12 sessions, each comprising three 45-minute sessions per week. The data were analyzed using SPSS (version 26). **Results:** The results indicated that life skills education had a significant impact on the behavioral problems of working children in Karaj, resulting in a reduction in problems across five out of eight general dimensions. However, this education did not have a significant effect on enhancing the resilience of the children. **Discussions:** To enhance the resilience of working children, longer and more comprehensive educational programs are necessary, accompanied by a focus on environmental factors. By implementing these changes, it is hoped that educational programs will have more positive effects on the resilience and overall life conditions of working children.

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Background and Aim

Childhood is a pure and innocent period of human life in which natural and unadulterated tendencies such as happiness and cheerfulness of the soul are still present. This period in an individual's life symbolizes traits such as being unhypocritical, honest, and sincere (Hosseinzadeh Dashti et al., 2024). At this stage of life, individuals have not yet been influenced by the formal and glamorous social environment and have not strayed from their originality. Therefore, they have preserved their existential authenticity with natural and unadulterated tendencies, such as sincere laughter, a zest for life, and the cheerfulness of early adolescence. During this period, traits such as a sense of freedom and hope can be observed in their existence (Fathiazad et al., 2019). It is during this period that a child's behavior, particularly their emotional and social development, is shaped by interactions with parents and those around them. A person acquires most of their lifelong habits and rational behaviors during childhood, and it is at this stage that they learn the quality of adapting to the environment throughout their lives (Miles et al., 2016).

With the expansion of society and social changes, behavioral problems in children have become one of the most important challenges of society. Children may face problems such as lack of concentration, disobedience, very angry, violence, and inability to interact socially. To address these issues, teaching children life skills is crucial (Steele et al., 2017; Esmaili et al., 2023). These trainings help children learn communication skills, emotional management, problem-solving, decision-making, self-control, and critical thinking. Through their correct use, they reduce behavioral problems and increase their resilience. One of the most important groups exposed to behavioral problems is working children (Hosseini et al., 2017; Movahednejad et al., 2023).

Working children are a group of children who, by choice or necessity, have severed their ties with their families and chosen the streets as their place of living and working (Dehganpour, 2017). Working children are a particularly vulnerable population. International agencies and NGOs have so far found topics focused on these children for research (Ahad et al., 2021; Dhakal et al., 2023). All working children are the target of some instrumental violence that ignores their rights to live and grow up in a safe environment. Efforts to eradicate the problems created by violence have been weak (Rangbar and Mullally, 2021). This domineering approach reflects a widespread and incorrect understanding of the living conditions and problems faced by these children and is exploited solely to provide media fodder and stimulate the emotions of the audience (Jalili Moayad et al., 2021). The phenomenon of child labor is a problem that most countries in the world are struggling with. At first glance, it appears that the social and cultural poverty of the family contributes to the phenomenon of child labor. However, upon closer examination, we find that the beginning and spread of this problem should be considered the result of the poverty of the economic and social systems, as well as the policies governing society. Although accurate statistics on the number of such children are not available, the existence of more than one hundred million working children worldwide makes it clear that this issue needs to be addressed seriously (Kargar Khorami et al., 2022; Farjad, Mohammad Hossein, 2009). In Iran, the problem of child labor is not a new phenomenon, and even in the most prosperous economic era of this border and region, we have witnessed such a phenomenon. In the past, most of these children were dependent on immigrant minorities who, due to lack of a fixed source of income, used all means, including their children, to make a living (Ango et al., 2023). However, today, migration is not the only reason for the existence of street children; economic, social, cultural, and psychological factors within society in general, as well as the mutual effects of these factors, also play a role in the emergence of this phenomenon (Sadeghi et al., 2015). If these factors are divided into smaller components, we can point to factors such as poverty, illiteracy, cultural poverty, homelessness, vagrancy, laziness, seasonal unemployment, insufficient income, economic crises, drug addiction, broken families, irresponsible parents, children being left without guardianship, running away from home, large number of children, wrong education of parents, television and the press, unplanned and uncontrolled migration from villages to cities, abuse of people's compassion and religious beliefs in helping the poor, easy access to income and lack of correct and decisive legal action on the spread of this phenomenon, as well as the ineffectiveness of serious measures taken. (Farjad, Mohammad Hossein; 2009). Children working in such jobs are deprived of their childhood and are exposed to physical, social, or psychological stress due to long working hours. Insufficient wages, high responsibility, and lack of access to education erode the dignity and self-esteem of these children

(Pirkhandan et al., 2021). Apart from the harm caused to children's cognitive and social development, most child workers are also exposed to emotional and physical abuse. Given their physiological and psychological immaturity and biological processes, children are more susceptible to abuse and health-related problems than adults (Ango et al., 2022). Resilience is a factor that plays a protective role in addressing children's emotional and behavioral problems, defined as the ability to overcome or adjust to difficult situations (Mehrvarz et al., 2021).

In other words, resilience refers to positive growth, adaptability, and achieving a state of balance following a disruption in individuals (Talebi et al., 2022). Working children are exposed to many risks, and resilience can be of great importance due to the traumatic conditions they face. Resilience fosters a hopeful attitude that helps build the future for these children. In today's world, the number of children exposed to trauma is increasing, raising the question of how to reduce risk factors (Mehrvarz et al., 2021). One of the problems these children face is a weakness in life skills. To achieve proper social adaptation and, as a result, success in all stages of life, a series of skills are necessary. One of the important goals of society is to prepare children to be useful in society, which requires teaching life skills to children. The Life Skills Training Program believes that psychosocial harm can be prevented by investing in working children and teaching interpersonal skills. The World Health Organization believes that life skills education is a means to promote and enhance the health of children and adolescents, encompassing several fundamental skills and abilities. These skills include decision-making ability, problem-solving ability, creative thinking skills, critical thinking ability, self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship skills, and the ability to cope with emotions (Sturrock, 2016). Life skills are a person-centered approach that aims to help people develop the skills necessary for life. These skills emphasize not only the current capabilities of people but also their future capabilities. Life skills education, utilizing participatory and interactive methods, helps children learn how to think rather than what to think about. This education provides children with a powerful tool for developing cognitive, social, interpersonal, and emotional adjustment skills. Given the broad dimensions of life skills training, it is essential to provide this training to working children to prevent many of their psychological, social, and physical problems (Molahi et al., 2019).

Life skills are a set of abilities that enable individuals to lead happy and meaningful lives and reach their full potential (Ellwood et al., 2022). Individuals who possess adequate life skills tend to thrive. In this context, meaningful living is achieved through mental well-being, self-awareness, and the skills to appreciate others, as well as striving for well-being within one's community. Therefore, instilling life skills in schools supports the mental well-being of children and adolescents now and in the future and reduces their suffering in adulthood. Life skills can be implemented as a module or as individual exercises. Teachers and other school staff should familiarize themselves with it and even undergo life skills training (Jalili Moayad et al., 2021).

Domestic and foreign studies conducted on child labor have different strengths and weaknesses. Begjani et al. (2022) have pointed out the inconsistency in the sample population, while Pirkhandan et al. (2021) have examined the typology of child labor but have not provided practical solutions. Simber et al. (2019) have not given sufficient attention to environmental and family factors, and Abdollahi (2016) has highlighted the need for further studies on the effectiveness of educational programs. In foreign studies, Ahad et al. (2023) have highlighted sample limitations, and Andreassen et al. (2023) have pointed out shortcomings in the definition of resilience. To accurately examine the situation of child labor, a combination of different approaches is necessary.

Given the increasing number of working children in urban communities and the devastating effects of poverty, family instability, and educational limitations on their lives, this study can help provide practical solutions to improve the conditions of these children. Teaching life skills to working children can enhance their resilience and equip them with the social and emotional skills necessary to navigate everyday challenges. This research can play a crucial role in informing the formulation of policies and support programs for this vulnerable group. While many studies have been conducted on the impact of social and economic conditions on working children, limited research has yet to examine in detail the impact of life skills training on reducing behavioral problems and increasing the resilience of these children. In particular, research specifically addressing working children in urban and semi-industrial areas, such as Karaj City (Iran), is rare. Moreover, few studies have compared the resilience of working children with their non-working counterparts and have paid attention to the role of targeted training in

improving the situation of these children. Additionally, the living conditions of working children in Karaj, one of the important cities in Alborz province, are influenced by several factors, including economic poverty, family instability, and limited access to education. These adverse conditions can have profound effects on the resilience and behavioral problems of these children. Working children face challenges such as violence, anger, and disobedience due to daily pressures and difficult living conditions. Research on the living conditions, resilience, and behavioral problems of these children, especially in a densely populated and dynamic city like Karaj, is crucial to improving the situation of this vulnerable group. Given these issues, research on behavioral problems and resilience of working children is vital. Social poverty, unstable family conditions, and limited access to education increase the physical and psychological risks of these children. Resilience as a hopeful attitude and effective strategy can help these children build a better future. Research has shown that working children are prone to risky behaviors and violence, and their resilience is lower than that of normal children. Since resilience helps improve life skills, implementing life skills training programs for working children seems essential. Given that no research has been conducted in the country on the impact of life skills training on behavioral problems and resilience of working children, this study aimed to investigate these effects in Karaj city.

Research Methods

In line with the main objective of this research, namely to assess the impact of life skills training on behavioral issues and resilience among working children in Karaj, an applied, quasi-experimental design was employed, incorporating a pre-test–post-test framework with a control group. This methodological approach was selected for its ability to provide substantial control over confounding variables, thereby enabling meaningful comparisons between the experimental and control groups. The statistical population consisted of all male working children aged 7 to 13 years in Karaj who were enrolled in childcare centers receiving welfare support during the 2023–2024 academic year. From this population, 30 individuals were selected using the total sampling method, resulting in 15 participants in the experimental group and 15 in the control group. The total sampling method was employed due to the limited number of people in this specific population, aiming to increase the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the research results. Valid and standardized instruments were used to collect data, including questionnaires assessing behavioral problems and resilience. The content validity of these instruments was examined and confirmed by experts in the fields of psychology and educational sciences. In addition, the reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the results indicated that they demonstrated appropriate reliability. The research was conducted as follows: first, a pre-test was administered to both experimental and control groups. Then, the experimental group underwent life skills training for one month (three sessions per week, each session lasting 45 minutes). The post-test was administered to both groups after the end of the training course. The entry criteria for the study included being aged 7 to 13 years, having an active work record in welfare centers, and consent from the children's parents or guardians. The exclusion criteria included missing more than two sessions in the training course and withdrawing from the study. To control for confounding variables, efforts were made to prevent contact and information exchange between children in the experimental and control groups in out-of-school settings. These measures were significant in reducing the potential effects of indirect learning or environmental influences on the research results.

Achenbach Questionnaire (2001) (Teacher Report Form): The Achenbach Questionnaire (2001) (Teacher Report Form) is designed to assess behavioral and emotional problems in children aged 6 to 18 years. This instrument consists of two parts: the first part, which consists of 12 questions, assesses the child's competencies and disabilities, and the second part assesses emotional and behavioral problems such as anxiety/depression, withdrawal/depression, and aggressive behavior. Scoring is based on a 3-point Likert scale. The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed through various analyses, including internal correlation of the scales and factor analysis. Its reliability has been reported, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from 0.63 to 0.95. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire in Iran have been reported by Minaei (2006). The internal consistency of the scales was estimated using Cronbach's alpha formula. The range of internal consistency coefficients of the

scales is from 0.63 to 0.95. The temporal stability of the scales was also examined using the test-retest method, with a time interval of 5-8 weeks, and the range of temporal stability coefficients obtained was from 0.32 to 0.67. Agreement between respondents was also examined. The range of these coefficients fluctuated from 0.09 to 0.67. Various analyses were also conducted regarding validity. Among these analyses, the internal correlation of the scales of each form, the correlation of the question-total score, group differentiation, differentiation power, and factor analysis can be mentioned (Hosseini et al., 2017). Additionally, Kakabrai et al. (2006) reported the reliability of this test, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.92 for girls, 0.95 for boys, and 0.94 for the entire sample, as well as split-half method values of 0.85 for girls, 0.79 for boys, and 0.82 for the entire sample. Habibi et al. (2006) reported the reliability of this test with Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 for identical twins, 0.9 for non-identical twins, and 0.93 for the entire sample, and with the split-half method of 0.91 for identical twins and 0.86 for non-identical twins and 0.89 for the entire sample (Qaderi and Qaderi, 2017).

Resilience Questionnaire (2003): The Connor-Davidson Resilience Questionnaire (CD-RIS) was designed in 2003 to measure the level of resilience of individuals in the age groups of adolescents to adults. This questionnaire consists of 25 items, each scored on a 5-point Likert scale—the scores on the questionnaire range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater resilience. The validity of this tool has been confirmed through factor analysis, which reveals five main components. The reliability of the questionnaire has also been confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84. In the study by Besharat et al. (2007), the validity and reliability of this questionnaire were confirmed (Ranjbar and Movallali, 2021). In the study by Ranjbar and Movallali (2021), the reliability of the questionnaire was also assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test, which yielded an alpha of 0.84. Therefore, this tool demonstrates good reliability. Although the results of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and convergent and divergent validity of the scale have been reported to be sufficient, and although the results of exploratory factor analysis have confirmed the existence of five factors of competence/personal strength, trust in personal instincts/tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions/safe relationships, control, and spirituality for the resilience scale, since the reliability and validity of the subscales have not yet been definitively confirmed, only the total resilience score is currently considered valid for research purposes (Mehrvarz et al., 2021).

After initial correspondence with the managers of the child labor centers and obtaining the necessary approvals, the steps to obtain permission from the university ethics committee were also completed, and the research ethics code was received. All participants and their parents or legal guardians were fully informed of the objectives of the study and its steps, and written consent was obtained to participate in the study. Subsequently, the research samples were selected from among eligible working children in two child labor centers in Karaj. The data collection steps began with the distribution and completion of the Achenbach (2001) and Connor-Davidson (2003) questionnaires by the teachers of these children. The experimental group consisted of 15 working children who completed the life skills training course in twelve 45-minute sessions over four weeks. At the same time, the control group continued their daily activities without any intervention. A detailed description of the session content is provided in the appendices. A brief description and general objectives of each session were as follows:

Table 1. Concepts and exercises related to life skills.

Session Number and Title	Practical Goals
Session 1: Introduction to Life Skills	Introducing the concept of life skills and their importance in everyday life.
Session 2: Anger Control	Teaching ways to control and manage anger constructively and effectively.
Session 3: Stress Management	Teaching ways to deal with stress and applying relaxation techniques when needed.
Session 4: Managing Life Crises	Teaching crisis management techniques and improving decision-making ability in complex situations.
Session 5: Creative Thinking	Encouraging creative thinking and using it
Session 6: Methodical Thinking	Training the ability to analyze and evaluate logically and

	rationally in different situations.
Session 7: Resolving Personal Conflicts	Teaching ways to resolve conflicts and manage differences in personal and social communications.
Session 8: Empathy with others	Encouraging the establishment of intimate and respectful relationships with others and teaching communication skills.
Session 9: The ability to be confident	Encouragement to improve self-confidence and positive self-evaluation.
Session 10: Communication Skills	Teaching effective communication skills and active listening skills.
Session 11: Making the Right Decisions	Teaching the steps of effective decision-making and evaluating the consequences of decisions.
Session 12: Review and Evaluation	A review of the skills learned and an assessment of children's progress and areas where they can improve in their daily lives.

The SPSS software (version 26) was used for data analysis. First, descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum, were used to describe the characteristics of the sample. In the inferential statistics section, the prerequisites for parametric statistical tests, including normality of the distribution of variables (assessed with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), homogeneity of variances (evaluated with the Levine test), and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices (tested with the Box's M test), were examined. After confirming the statistical assumptions, the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) test was used to analyze the research hypotheses. The statistical significance level for this study was set at 0.05. In this review, all steps involved in obtaining permission, observing ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis methods have been fully and accurately described to meet the standards expected by the research reviewers.

Results

The results of the demographic characteristics of the study sample indicate that all participants (100%) were male. The age distribution of the samples in the experimental and control groups was relatively balanced; however, differences were observed in the age groups of 10 and 12 years, with the highest frequency associated with the 12-year age group, comprising nine individuals (30%). In the distribution based on educational level, the fifth grade had the highest number, with 12 people (40%), especially in the control group, where seven people were represented. In general, educational levels at other levels were also distributed almost equally between the experimental and control groups. The descriptive indices of the research variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive indices of Achenbach dimensions and total score.

		Group								
		Test			Control			Total		
		Average	Standard Deviation	Number	Average	Standard Deviation	Number	Average	Standard Deviation	Number
Depression	Post-test	28.87	5.055	15	24.80	4.554	15	26.83	5.160	30
	Pre-Test	30.87	5.330	15	24.93	4.350	15	27.90	5.653	30
Isolation	Post-test	14.13	2.532	15	14.27	3.127	15	14.20	2.797	30
	Pre-Test	16.67	3.132	15	15.07	3.411	15	15.87	3.319	30
Physical complaints	Post-test	20.33	5.367	15	22.27	3.845	15	21.30	4.692	30
	Pre-	30.93	4.183	15	27.47	3.441	15	29.20	4.156	30

	Test									
Social problems	Post-test	15.73	3.369	15	14.73	3.195	15	15.23	3.266	30
	Pre-Test	18.33	3.374	15	13.87	2.356	15	16.10	3.652	30
Thinking problems	Post-test	18.33	1.633	15	25.27	2.282	15	21.80	4.029	30
	Pre-Test	21.53	2.446	15	20.60	2.131	15	21.07	2.303	30
Attention problems	Post-test	8.400	1.639	15	15.40	2.384	15	11.90	4.088	30
	Pre-Test	11.07	1.944	15	15.13	2.386	15	13.10	2.975	30
Law-breaking	Post-test	7.600	2.131	15	7.730	1.668	15	7.670	1.882	30
	Pre-Test	8.470	1.187	15	7.930	1.033	15	8.200	1.126	30
Aggression	Post-test	19.73	4.061	15	25.47	3.159	15	22.60	4.613	30
	Pre-Test	26.67	2.350	15	25.07	3.058	15	25.87	2.801	30
Total score	Post-test	133.13	12.950	15	149.93	12.239	15	141.53	15.042	30
	Pre-Test	164.53	13.120	15	150.07	10.813	15	157.30	13.916	30

Table 2 presents the descriptive indices of the behavioral problems variable, as measured by the Achenbach questionnaire and its eight dimensions. The results indicate that the post-test mean of all Achenbach dimensions, as well as the total score of this variable, decreased in the experimental group.

Table 3. Descriptive indicators of resilience score

Variable		Group	N	Average	Standard Deviation	Error
Resilience	Pre-test	Treatment	15	56.07	1.831	0.473
		Control	15	54.00	2.264	0.584
		Total	30	54.97	2.312	0.422
	Post-test	Treatment	15	55.13	2.100	0.542
		Control	15	53.87	2.563	0.662
		Total	30	54.07	2.303	0.421

Table 3 indicates a slight increase in the mean scores of the experimental group in resilience and its total score in the post-test stage. Analysis of covariance was used to examine the main hypotheses of the study, considering the research methodology and the way the data interacted. The one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to examine the normality of the population distribution. According to the results, the distribution of all variables in both groups is normal. The Box's M test was used to examine the homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices of the variables. The results show that the assumption of homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices for behavioral problems and resilience (Box's M=1.321, F=3, P=0.748) has been met, and it is clear that we have not violated the assumption of the covariance-variance matrix. The results also show that the relationships between the dependent variables are not higher than the critical value, and this assumption has also been met. After the assumptions of the multivariate analysis of covariance are met, the findings are presented by separating the research hypotheses. The results of the multivariate analysis of variance for the dimensions of behavioral problems are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Multivariate analysis of variance of the difference between the two experimental and control groups in the dimensions of behavioral problems

Effect	Dependent variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Significance level	Parabolic eta squared	Test power
Group membership	Depression	11.690	1	11.690	1.346	0.260	0.063	0.197
	Isolation	7.1890	1	7.189	2.807	0.109	0.123	0.358
	Physical complaints	37.799	1	37.799	2.670	0.118	0.118	0.343
	Social problems	27.273	1	27.273	6.188	0.022	0.236	0.658
	Thinking problems	58.027	1	58.027	12.866	0.002	0.391	0.926
	Attention problems	13.906	1	13.906	12.430	0.002	0.383	0.918
	Lawbreaking	12.348	1	12.348	6.142	0.022	0.235	0.655
	Aggression	82.111	1	82.111	11.032	0.003	0.356	0.885

Table 4 reports the results of the analysis of variance to examine the effect of group membership on various dependent variables, including depression, withdrawal, physical complaints, social problems, thinking problems, attention problems, lawbreaking, and aggression. The significance level for the variables depression, withdrawal, and physical complaints indicates non-significance. However, for the variables social problems, thinking problems, attention problems, lawbreaking, and aggression, the effect of group membership is significant. Given that the five main dimensions of behavioral problems have experienced a significant decrease under the influence of life skills training, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis has been confirmed.
The results of the multivariate analysis of variance for resilience are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of analysis of covariance of the difference between the experimental and control groups in resilience

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Significance level	Parabolic eta squared	Test power
Fixed value	11.433	1	11.433	3.087	0.090	0.103	0.396
Resilience pre-test	53.753	1	53.753	14.516	0.001	0.350	0.956
Group	10.426	1	10.426	2.816	0.105	0.094	0.366
Error	99.980	27	3.703				
Total	87850.000	30					

Table 5 indicates that after eliminating the pre-test effect and the initial difference between the groups, life skills training did not have a significant impact on students' resilience, and there was no significant difference between the control and experimental groups. Considering these results, it can be stated that there is no acceptable evidence to confirm the second hypothesis, and this hypothesis is rejected.

Discussions

Teaching life skills to working children in Karaj, Iran, has a significant impact on reducing behavioral problems and increasing their resilience. Life skills encompass a set of abilities and techniques that enable individuals to cope more effectively with the challenges and problems of everyday life. These skills include stress management, problem-solving, critical thinking, self-awareness, and effective communication.
To test the first hypothesis of the study, “Life skills training is effective in reducing the level of behavioral problems among working children in Karaj,” a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted. This statistical method was employed to assess the effect of group membership (experimental vs. control) on multiple dependent variables, including depression, social withdrawal, somatic complaints, social problems, thought problems, attention difficulties, rule-

breaking behavior, and aggression. The results of the analysis of variance were reported to determine the significance and magnitude of these effects. Compared to previous studies, the results of this study are similar to those of some studies that have examined the positive effects of life skills training on reducing behavioral problems and increasing resilience in children. In particular, similar studies have demonstrated that life skills training can help improve children's mental well-being, reduce aggressive behaviors, and address social problems (as seen in the studies of Dehganpour, 2007 and Ranjbar and Movallali ,2021). Moreover, in previous studies that examined the effect of life skills training on behavioral problems, similar results have been observed in reducing anxiety and depression and improving social status (Begjani et al., 2022).

In explaining these findings, it can be stated that life skills training plays a crucial role in reducing behavioral problems among working children in Karaj. Life skills encompass abilities such as stress management, problem-solving, self-awareness, effective communication, and critical thinking, which help children better manage their behaviors. Working children usually face more behavioral problems due to their stressful and challenging living conditions. Teaching life skills to these children equips them with the tools to manage everyday stresses and pressures more effectively, ultimately reducing their disruptive and destructive behaviors. By learning these skills, children learn how to express their feelings and needs more healthily and find more effective ways to interact with others. In addition, life skills training helps working children make better decisions when faced with problems and challenges and avoid immediate and inappropriate reactions. These skills enable children to enhance their social and academic behaviors and employ rational and constructive solutions rather than resorting to violent or aggressive confrontations. As a result, the social and academic environment of working children also improves, allowing them to establish better relationships with peers and adults. These positive changes not only help reduce behavioral problems but also lead to an increased quality of life and a brighter future for these children. The results show that there is no significant difference between the study groups in terms of depression levels. This may be because depression is more influenced by certain individual and environmental factors that are not directly related to membership in specific groups. Withdrawal as an individual behavior may be more influenced by internal factors and personality of the individual than by membership in social groups. For this reason, the effect of group membership on this variable was not significant. Physical complaints can be caused by physical and medical factors that are not related to membership in specific groups. Therefore, group membership did not have a significant effect on this variable.

The significant effect of group membership on social problems suggests that membership in certain groups can influence how an individual interacts socially. This may be due to the presence of social support or group pressures that influence an individual's social behaviors. Membership in certain groups can help shape thought and cognitive patterns. For instance, support groups can help individuals think more logically and positively. The significant effect of group membership on attention problems may be due to the presence of group structures and routines that can help improve an individual's focus and attention. Membership in specific groups can lead to the encouragement or prevention of law-breaking behaviors. Groups that have positive and constructive norms and rules can help reduce law-breaking behaviors. The significant effect of group membership on aggression suggests that groups can play a role in reinforcing or reducing aggressive behaviors. Groups that have positive and supportive interactions can help reduce aggression.

In the second hypothesis, life skills training is effective in enhancing the resilience of working children in Karaj. The results show that after removing the pre-test effect and initial differences between groups, life skills training did not create a significant difference in students' resilience, and there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups. Given these results, it can be said that there is insufficient evidence to confirm the second hypothesis, and therefore, it is rejected. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Begjani et al. (2022), Pasiyar et al. (2019), and Abdollahi (2015) in terms of the effectiveness of life skills training programs in reducing behavioral problems and enhancing the resilience of working children.

The results of the study demonstrated that life skills training did not have a significant impact on the resilience of working children in Karaj. This result indicates that, after implementing the training and controlling for pre-test effects and initial differences between the groups, the average resilience in the experimental and control groups did not differ significantly, suggesting that the training provided

could not have a significant impact on increasing the resilience of these students. Several reasons could have led to this result. First, working children may have lower resilience due to the living conditions and economic and social problems they experience, which require more time and effort to change. Second, the educational content provided may not be sufficiently adapted to the specific needs and conditions of these children and could not effectively affect their resilience. Additionally, environmental and family factors that affect working children, which are beyond the control of educational programs, can play a significant role in their resilience and mitigate the effects of education. These factors require further investigation to design and implement more effective training programs. In addition, the lack of access to adequate psychosocial support for working children may be another reason why life skills training is ineffective in increasing their resilience. These children often face problems such as poverty, neglect, forced labor, and unstable living conditions that directly and indirectly affect their psychological abilities and resilience. In such situations, the training provided alone may not be enough, and more comprehensive interventions are needed that include family, social, and even economic support.

Finally, another issue that needs to be addressed is the quality and implementation of educational programs. For various reasons, educators and trainers may not have been able to provide effective and appropriate training to meet the needs of working children. To increase the effectiveness of these trainings, there is a need to develop and implement educational programs tailored to the specific conditions of working children and to utilize interactive and participatory teaching methods that can increase children's active engagement and involvement in the learning process. Also, continuous evaluation and continuous modification of educational programs based on feedback and results from their implementation can help improve the quality and effectiveness of these trainings.

According to the findings, practical suggestions include implementing long-term and continuous life skills training programs, extending these programs to families, establishing support and counseling centers for working children and their families, and continually evaluating programs to improve content and teaching methods. Additionally, the research suggestions section addresses factors that may hinder the effectiveness of life skills training in enhancing the resilience of working children, including family, economic, and social conditions, as well as the comparison of different teaching methods and educational content. Research limitations include the difficulty in accessing suitable samples of working children, challenges in adapting educational content to meet children's needs, time constraints in conducting the research, and the impact of economic and social conditions beyond the researchers' control on the research results.

Ethical Considerations

This study is part of a master's thesis conducted in the field of Educational Sciences at the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the university's ethics committee under the code IR.USWR.REC.2023.274, dated March 16, 2023.

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Authors' Contribution

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Conflict of Interest

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