Effect of Humor Training on Social Function in Nursing Student of Islamic Azad University of Estahban

Safavi Mahbobeh1, Parisa Rostambeygi2, Maasoumeh Barkhordary3, Azam Roshandel4

1. Assistant professor , PHD of health services management , Department of nursing and midwifery Dean , Tehran medical Branch, Islamic Azad university , Tehran , Iran.
2. Instructor, MSc of Nursing, Faculty of nursing and Midwifery, Islamic Azad University of Estahban, Shiraz, Iran
3. Instructor, MSc of Nursing, Faculty of Medical Science, Islamic Azad University of Yazd, Yazd, Iran
4. Msc of Mental Health Nursing, Department of Nursing,Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University,Zanjan,Iran.

Corresponding Author email: Rostambeygi_P@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: The subject of humor in the ancient days of life and social relations is there and it seems that humor as communication tool between individuals and groups can have beliefs and deep emotions and feelings tendencies of individuals subject to various specified. This study is to determine humor training effects on humor function of nursing students of Islamic Azad university of Estahban. This is an empirical study which 195 nursing students of Islamic Azad University of Estahban are settled both experimental control group, randomly. People completed three questionnaires before starting and after finishing interference, that one had 24 questions about humor (Mc. Ghee) and another consisted Social Function scale of General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg and Hiller) and demographic data form. For determining validity of collecting data by content method and device reliability, it is used further test. Humor training class hold up for experimental group in 4 sessions of 3 hours. Data was analyzed by SPSS 16 software using descriptive and inferential (T-Test) statistics. In pretest mean humor score was in Experimental group 125.3±24.71 and in control group 120±19.43 and mean Social Function score was in Experimental group 12.91±3.25 and control group 12.94±3.09. In posttest mean humor score was in Experimental group 144.6±11/50 and in control group 119.91±19.57 and mean Social Function score was in Experimental group 9.92±2.21 and control group 13.52±2.79. By comprising the score of experimental and control group’s pre-test, post-test, it is shown on meaningful difference between humor scores (Ps0.01). also, there were meaningful statistical difference between two groups in Social Function scale (Ps0.01).It can be concluded that with the personal agent (humor) in the limit reasonable and acceptable to society in daily function are increased social function. The result of the present study can have implications for teachers. Instructors can be used teach humor as a component of positive behavioral of social welfare and better performance.

Keywords: Humors, Social Function, Student, Nursing.

INTRODUCTION

Sense of humor is a subject which has existed since very old time in life and social relationships and it seems that it is as old as the history of social life itself. Humor is a kind of medium among people and groups and it can determine their depth of affections, emotions, beliefs, and tendencies about different subjects. Due to the importance which the public media and mass communication devices have allocated to this subject, it could be stated that humor and joking have turned into social phenomena. Primary characteristic of a social phenomenon is that it influences mutual relationships in the society. Sense of humor is a rich language to convey human’s thoughts and beliefs which has prominent characteristics; these properties make each work of humor have its own specific regulations and structures. The hypothesis that the sense of humor makes a person be able to become more compatible with adverse experiences has been developed by many humor theorists and psychotherapists. Finally, it is possible that using humor in stressful situations solicits social supports, while depressed answers or even complaints cause the person to be rejected by the others (Capps 2006). The people use sense of humor at work and social situations in order to confront disease hypotheses, decrease tension and share solidarity with others, or persuade others (Chapple & Zibbland 2004). Through several investigations,
Shibles figured out that humor causes enjoyment of beauty and is a kind of confrontation strategy. It replaces negative emotions with positive ones and facilitates relationship continuation (Shibles 2004). Humor opens the gates of relation without fear and, in return, creates positive, constructive, and peaceful relationship, bases respect and trust (Mazlish & Feber 2006). Hickman showed that organized use of humor confronts insulting activities and even helps restore pugnacious relationships. The relationship between laughter and Academic success has been suggested by evidence. There will be positive relationship between use of humor by parents and teachers and academic success until, and after college years (Hickman & Crossland 2005). Research has shown that humor expands social networks and supportive system and this heightened social support enhances health through decreasing stress (Martin 2003). In fact, positive styles of joking are among the factors which strengthen social relationships, create and maintain social correlation and group solidarity. People with more sense of humor and less seriousness towards life can start conversations and friendship, and prove themselves, create emotional support and control quarrels more easily than serious people (Yip & Martin 2006). Humor has positive effects on people with anti-social personality through increasing social, emotional, and moral awareness and capabilities, which enhances self awareness and reality assessment (Martens 2004). Humor connects people to each other and lessens responsibility load so that people can avoid loneliness through making relationship with those who are interested in happiness (Lindeman et al. 2009). The managers who use humor have better relationships with their clerks. Humor enforces relationships and compatibility and has been identified as a positive behavior in effective leadership (Buxman 2008). As for critical occupations, such as doctors and people with paramedical occupations who always deal with serious injuries or dangerous diseases, accidents, suicides, occasional deaths, humor is an important means which could be used to confront emotional reactions in different situations. Humor may sometimes be a therapeutically tool to improve nursing service and lessen physical pains (Shibles 2004). When a doctor, nurse or patient jokes, the social distance between them shrinks and creates a thread of relationship and encourages patients to discuss difficult issues. Nurses may instruct patients or their families about patient cares. Using humor, while instructing patients these points, decreases anxiety and encourages them to pay more attention to the instructions. Humor builds up a mental image and therefore, a mental framework creation in patients’ mind makes it easy to retrieve information. Nurses who use effective humor create a positive relationship with other nurses, doctors, managers, patients, and their family members and enforce human relationships; which is discerned by the patient that the nurse sees the patient as a human being (Buxman 2008). According to what was mentioned, and since the studies on humor is limited in our country (Iran), the present research aimed at investigating the effects of humor instruction on social functions of nursing students of Islamic Open University in Estahban’s unit.

**METHODS**

The research was an empirical study. The population consisted of all the at under-graduate nursing students. Since the initial studies in the US showed about %75 of the society had almost mental health and using this intervention heightens this amount to %90 a sample of 95 subjects was determined for each group with certainty level of %95 and test strength of %80.(3)

\[ n = \frac{2(1 - \alpha + 1 - \beta)^2 p(1 - p)}{(p_0 - p_1)^2} = \frac{2 \times 7.5 \times 0.825 \times 1175}{0.15^2} = 95 \]

Therefore, in this research, 190 students of Estahban were selected randomly and were divided into two groups (control and intervention) of 95 subjects. Research inclusion criteria included: no evident mental diseases, physical health, not having background diseases effective on psyche such as thyroid disorders, not using medicine influential on psyche during the last month, and consent to participate in the study. All 190 qualified students participate in the study. The availability time to research units was determined through planning and previous agreement with officials of the college during the term. It has to be mentioned that the researchers are teachers of that college; therefore, after having obtained availability, they explained the objectives and processes of study for units and invited the members of groups to participate in training course. The classes were held to investigate the effects of humor on mental health of nursing students of Islamic Open University of Estahban. These classes took four sessions, 3 hours a session, with a week of interval between each session. The course contents were presented to the students on the first day, and at the beginning of first session and at the end of fourth session inventories were given to the subjects to be completed. At the beginning of each session the volunteer subjects were required to describe their previous week activities and other members of the group were asked to give feedback and comment on the volunteers’ activities. The contents of the sessions were mostly based on Paul Mc Ghee’s “seven steps to nurture humor” which were adopted from one of his books titled as “health, healing and amuse system”. Paul Mc Ghee is one of the most eminent researchers and authors of humor and laughter in the world, also holder of PhD degree in psychology who has published 11 books and many articles on developing joking skills. The first session was mostly spent on introduction and completing the inventories by the units under study and presenting materials related to
effects of humor on physiological and mental aspects of people. The class presentation was given as a lecture and group talks in a delightful and intimate atmosphere. Besides defining humor and related concepts, and its benefits, individuality of the sense of humor and different ways of obtaining knowledge about it were discussed during the first session. The second session was focused most on the second and the third stages of 7 steps of humor, i.e. playing and naughtiness (and ways to overcome excessive seriousness), laughing and its effects and benefits, and practicing on laughing more. The principles of telling jokes, and funny stories were also discussed, which relates to the fourth step of humor. At the third session, playing with words as well as the ways to find humor in routine life, and laughing at oneself and its difference with inferiority complex were the main topics of the class. The last session was allocated to the ways to utilize sense of humor in order to confront stress. At the end of the fourth session, an audio CD was given to every subject. Once more, they completed a questionnaire. The control group completed the questionnaires both before and after implementation of intervention on experiment group. After collecting the inventories, the collection of tasks and practices of humor which were given to the experiment group on each session were given to the control group members as well. Data collection tools in this study consisted of three sections including: demographical properties inventory, social performance scale questions in general health questionnaire (GHQ-28), and humor questionnaire. Social performance scale questions in general health questionnaire (GHQ-28) consisted of questions related to measurement of social performance rate which was developed by Goldberg and Hiller in 1979. It includes 7 questions (15). In this method, “no” option was scored 0, “a little” option was scored 1, “much” was scored 2, and “very much” was scored 3; therefore, the scores will range from 0 to 21.the questionnaire about measuring humor rate of people was developed by Mc Ghee (1999), and contains 24 questions. For each question a 7-score Likert criterion was allocated, with 1 given to “completely disagree” option and 7 given to “completely agree” option. The minimum score in this criterion is 24 and the maximum score is 168. In order to evaluate the validity of the inventories, content validity method was utilized. Therefore, having translated the questionnaire into Persian, and edited by the experts in psychiatry, and nursing. Test-retest method was utilized in order to determine the reliability of the questionnaire during which a sample of 10 subjects were selected and was implemented the questionnaire at two different times with an interval of 10 days. It has to be mentioned that this sample members were excluded from main samples included in the study. Then, the data were compared with each other and Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was determined (r=0.99) which shows reliability of the questionnaire. After that, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS (ver.16), utilizing both descriptive (developing tables, and absolute and relative frequency distribution) and (inferential statistical t-test) statistics. The significance level of the subjects was determined to be α<0.05.

**Ethical considerations**

This study abided by the Helsinki Declaration at all stages of its running and has been authorized by the Hospital and University ethics committee.

## RESULTS

All the distributed inventories were completed and analyzed. 195 nursery undergraduates in Estahban's Islamic Open University participated in this study in two groups, with the most frequency in both experiment (71 people, %74.7) and control group (63 people, %66.3) was for men. The highest frequency and percentage in both groups were for single subjects (80 people, %84.2 for experiment group as compared to 77 people, %81.1 for control group). The highest frequency and percentage in both intervention and control groups were for middle financial class (52 people, %55.3 and 54 people, %56.8, respectively. The majority of the units under study were between 20 and 25 without any mental or physical disease. As it could be seen in table 1, the mean humor score for experiment group in pre-test and post-test were 123.33 ±24.71 and 144.6±11.50, respectively. According to paired t-test there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test mean humor scores of experiment group (p<0.01), which indicates humor instruction had effects on increasing sense of humor. The mean of social function scores for experiment group in pre-test is 12.92±3.81 and 9.93±2.85 in post-test. According to paired t-test, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of social function of experiment group in pre-test and post test which reveals the effects of humor instruction on social functions. The control group’s mean of humor in pre-test was 120±19.33 and 119.91±19.57 in post-test. The mean of instruction effect was 0.46±3.05. Based on the paired t-test, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of humor in pre-test and post-test for control group (p>0.05). The mean score of social function for control group in pre-test and post-test were 13.28±2.87 and 13.52±2.79, respectively. According to the paired t-test, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of social functions in pre-test and post-test for control group (p>0.05). The pre-test mean scores of humor in experiment group and control group were respectively 125.3±24.71 and 120±19.43 which shows no difference according to independent t-test, which

---

1 - General Health Questionnaire
and relationships which are mostly rewarding, predict the skills in joking more. These results indicate that this is humor as a confrontation strategy. The people who are more able to create humor experience loneliness less. Actually the people’s feeling of security which predicts their tendency to use humor in common and renders fatigue, confusion, and anger (Capps 2006). Mizcof found out in a study that low levels of inter-personal anxiety (Boyd 2005). Humor can add intimacy, warmth and pleasure to mutual personal relationships and mend these patients were exposed to 70 comic movies, while other patients in hospital b were exposed to 70 eclectic movies (action, romance, play, etc.). The researchers found out that the patients who were exposed to humor received more social supports from the staff (Mihalcea &Strappart 2006). In another research (2004) which was conducted to investigate the effects of humor during last months of life of 140 patients about to die, it was found out that humor helped the patients to have optimism and self-esteem and showed that this considerable attribute of human will also exist at the end of life (Suzuki et al .2004). Capps in a research called “Humor and Life Stress on University Students” showed that humor lessens the effects of stress as well as depression, fatigue, confusion, and anger (Capps 2006). Mizo found out in a study that low levels of inter-personal anxiety and relationships which are mostly rewarding, predict the skills in joking more. These results indicate that this is actually the people’s feeling of security which predicts their tendency to use humor in common and renders humor as a confrontation strategy. The people who are more able to create humor experience loneliness less. In addition, those who can create positive in others more, are more satisfied with their relationships (Mizco 2004). Another study was conducted by Lengacher in which humor was introduced as a stimulator which helps people to laugh and feel happy and laughter gives cause to some physiological reactions and positive mental changes which is accompanied by self-esteem, lower depression, and positive judgments (Bennet & Lengacher 2007). Boyd states that everyone feels insecurity, fear, or shyness and humor can alleviate the pressures (Boyd 2005).Humor can add intimacy, warmth and pleasure to mutual personal relationships and mend.
sadness, conflicts and differences, create mental delight, and eliminate monotonousness from everyday life, increase closeness among people and more importantly, creates a close bond between family members (Pooladiry Shahri & Golestaneh 2009).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained from the present study, it could be inferred that humor instruction may increase social functioning among nursery students; therefore it is suggested to use humor to confront emotional reactions in critical situations. Humor instruction is a suitable method to heighten social function. The people who use humor in social contexts are at higher social levels, due to their increase in social relationship. The people who are more humorous are better able to come in terms on inter-personal conflicts; therefore, due to more satisfaction, they will have more intimate relationship with others.

| Table 1. Experiment and control groups’ comparison in terms of humor and social function in pre-test |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                  | Mean            | Standard Deviation | t       | d.f  | P -value |
| Humor            |                 |                  |         |      |          |
| Experiment       | 125.3           | 24.71             | 1.54    | 188  | 0.13     |
| Control          | 120             | 19.43             |         |      |          |
| Social Function  |                 |                  |         |      |          |
| Experiment       | 12.91           | 3.25              | 0.07    | 188  | 0.94     |
| Control          | 12.94           | 3.09              |         |      |          |

| Table 2. Experiment and control groups’ comparison in terms of humor and social function in pre-test |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                  | Mean            | Standard Deviation | F   | P-value | T  | df | p-value |
| Humor            |                 |                  |     |         |   |    |        |
| Experiment       | 144.6           | 11.50             | 18.47 | 0.01   | 10.59 | 152 | 0.01  |
| Control          | 119.91          | 19.57             |       |        |   |    |        |
| Social Function  |                 |                  |     |         |   |    |        |
| Experiment       | 9.92            | 2.21              | 2.36  | 0.13   | 9.75  | 188 | 0.01  |
| Control          | 13.52           | 2.79              |       |        |   |    |        |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to give their thanks to the Research Center’s president and vice president of Islamic Open University of Estahban, the students and all the colleagues who helped the authors conduct the present research.

REFERENCES

Buxman K.2008. Humor In the or: A stitch In time? AORN Journal 1(88); 757-778.
Capps D.2006.The Psychological Benefits of Humor. Pastoral psychology 54(5); 393- 411.
Chapple A, Zibbland S. 2004. The Role of Humor For Men With Testicular Cancer. Qualitative Health Research 14(8); 1123-1139.
Ulloth JK.2003.The Benefits of Humor in Nursing Education. Journal of Nursing 41(11); 476-482.