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**SELF-ESTEEM AND COPING
IN
ADOLESCENCE**

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ABSTRACT

A nine-week cognitive-behavioural training programme was developed to enhance self-esteem and teach coping skills to early adolescents. Sixty-seven students (37 males) participated in the weekly 90-minute programme. Students were taught rational thinking, social skills, and problem solving. Sixty-four students (30 males), acted as controls. At pre-training, post-training, and 5-month follow-up, students completed the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1985a), the short-form of the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1992), and a Programme Skills measure, developed by the researcher. Teachers and parents/guardians completed checklists adapted from Programme Skills. Two-way ANOVAs confirmed that there were no significant differences between experimental and control groups at pre-training. However, significant gender effects were obtained for the Short-Form CDI, and the Athletic Competence, Global Self-Worth, and Physical Appearance subscales of the SPPC. Repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted for each variable, comparing the scores at post-training and at follow-up, with those at pre-training. With group and gender as factors, there were no significant differences between groups when an alpha level of $p < .01$ was adopted. There was, however, a significant gender effect for Global Self-Worth at post-training. A subgroup scoring three-quarters of a standard deviation below the mean for Global Self-Worth were selected for further analysis using a Mann-Whitney U-test. This analysis revealed a significant experimental/control group difference for Programme Skills at post-training. Some evidence of construct validity for Programme Skills was obtained with a Cronbach's Alpha of .73, and significant moderate correlations of Programme Skills with the CDI Short-Form (transformed), and the Global Self-Worth subscale of the SPPC. Possible explanations of the results were discussed with respect to programme content, instructional techniques, the design and duration of the programme, and aspects related to sample characteristics, statistical power, and measurement. In particular, the preventative nature of the intervention was considered. The skills taught to typical classes of early adolescents were for potential use in times of difficulty, thus some of the benefits may lie dormant.

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