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Teaching healthy lifestyle behaviors based on philosophical thinking to preschool children: a randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

Background The promotion of a healthy lifestyle among preschool children is essential for establishing their future habits. Evidence indicates that the incorporation of philosophical thinking—encompassing critical, creative, and compassionate thought—can significantly contribute to children's cognitive and moral growth, thereby positively affecting their health-related decisions. This research evaluated the effects of imparting healthy lifestyle practices through philosophical thinking to preschool children.

Methods This randomized controlled trial involved 120 preschoolers, who were randomly assigned to intervention groups for children, parents, and a control group. Educational sessions were conducted in the intervention groups of preschool children and parents using various educational tools such as films, narratives, and games. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and JAMOVI software.

Results The present study provides evidence that instruction in healthy lifestyle behaviors grounded in philosophical thinking significantly enhances the healthy lifestyle practices of preschool children and their parents. The statistical analyses indicate that the improvements achieved are statistically significant, with both children and parents demonstrating enhancements in healthy lifestyle behavior scores two and four months following the intervention. While the effect sizes may be relatively small, the significance of the results underscores the potential for philosophical thinking interventions to foster positive behavior changes over time.

Conclusions This research showed that teaching healthy lifestyle practices through philosophical thinking improved healthy behaviors in preschool-aged children. The results were more pronounced in children than in their parents. Future studies should focus on longer interventions and explore the effects across different age groups.

Trial registration The international trial code is IRCT20230703058651N1 (date of registration 03/07/2023).

Keywords Preschool children- kids- healthy lifestyle behaviors, Philosophical thinking, Critical thinking- creative thinking- care thinking

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Supplementary Material 1

Supplementary Material 2

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Conceptualization, L.Gh., Z.Kh., M.H.K., and M.N.; methodology, G.h., Z.Kh., M.H.K., and M.N.; software, Z.Kh., A.R.A. and M.N.; formal analysis, Z.Kh., and A.R.A.; investigation, Z.Kh., A.R.A. and M.N.; writing—original draft preparation, Z.Kh. and M.N.; writing—review and editing, L.Gh., M.H.K., and M.N.; supervision, M.N.

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Data availability
The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate
While respecting the principles of confidentiality and not recording the individual characteristics of individuals, we asked the parents of all children to complete the written informed consent form. Questionnaires were completed in three periods before the intervention, two months, and four months after the end of the intervention. The ethics code of this study was issued by the ethics committee of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (IR.SUMS.SCHEANUT.REC.1402.040) (11th June 2023). The study was conducted in accordance with the 2013 Helsinki Declaration (including its 2020 updates), the CONSORT guideline (2009), and the COSMIN protocol (2020). Also, at the end of the intervention, the educational content of the intervention groups was provided to the control group. The study started on the 15th of October 2023 and concluded on the 20th of June 2024.

Consent for publication
Not applicable.

Competing interests
The authors declare no competing interests.

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