

Adaptation of ART for girls

To date, there are up to 40 published studies in scientific journals on ART, done in different contexts and with different target groups. The accumulated research indicates that ART increases the frequency of prosocial behaviors and reduces the incidence of antisocial and aggressive behaviors.

The majority of research, including ART studies, is done on boys. Approximately half of the studies on ART have gender-mixed groups and three studies are done explicitly on girls. The latest to be done in Iran (Ensafdaran, 2019), is a randomized study. The results showed significant differences in antisocial behavior and anger rumination. The conclusion the researchers draws is that ART can be used to prevent and reduce aggressiveness and antisocial behavior in girls.

The experience of working with girls and ART is good. The method and its pedagogy can be adapted to meet girls' unique needs. The content and construction of moral dilemmas, social skills and focus in self-control training are also relatively easy to carry out.

Gender-specific components

How can treatment be better adapted to the specific needs of this group? Several researchers point out the need to develop gender-specific methods that better meet the unique needs in girls.

The research reveals pathways and multiple levels of risk factors (biological, psychological, developmental, familial and social) that can lead girls into addiction and crime. There may be abuses of various kinds (sexual, physical, psychological, trauma and violence) caused by having been raised in dysfunctional families and failing in school.

Treatment should address problems of various kinds with "*victimization*" and abuse of different kinds, self-esteem, sexuality, domestic violence, gender roles and socialization. Factors such as age, ethnicity and culture are also crucial. Actions should focus on building skills to strengthen and repair relationships, regulate emotions and reduce arousal, improve social problem-solving skills, address thought traps and hostile interpretations, promote positive female development, strengthen the family, and address high-risk behaviors such as sexual activities and addictions.

The Juvenile Justice Anger Management (JJAM) Treatment for Girls, has been designed to meet the unique needs of teenage girls placed in institutions (Residential juvenile facilities). The program has incorporated these gender-specific components and has now also been tested in a randomized study. The follow-up study (Goldstein, et.al, 2018) shows that JJAM is a promising treatment to reduce anger and reactive aggression in girls who are placed in a youth institution.

The program developers stress the importance of recruiting appropriate staff who receive adequate training in using effective pedagogical strategies and building relationships.

Anger management is a method with good research support in this context. (Lee & DiGiuseppe, 2018). Anger control training is an essential component of ART. These gender-specific components can be built into existing ART programming.

References

- Chesney-Lind, M, et.al. (2008). *Girls' Troubles, Girls' Delinquency, and Gender Responsive Programming: A Review*. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology.
- Cooney, M., Small, S., & O'Connor, S. *Girls in the juvenile justice system Toward: effective gender-responsive programming*. Criminal Justice and Behavior
- Goldstein, N. et.al. (2018). *Juvenile Justice Anger Management (JJAM) Treatment for Girls: Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial*.
- Lee, A. & DiGiuseppe, L. (2018). *Anger and aggression treatments: a review of meta-analyses* . Current Opinion in Psychology.
- Welch, C. L. (2009). *Incorporating Gender Specific Approaches for Incarcerated Female Adolescents: Multilevel Risk Model for Practice*. Journal of Offender Rehabilitation.