Benefits of Peer Assisted Learning(PAL) in Preparing for Medical Licensing Examination

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Background

The most common way of learning in medical school is listening to a lecture and preparing for an exam. It usually requires students to study alone and learn by rote. However, some students are not successful through these learning strategies and fail to show good academic achievement. Providing an open and cooperative learning environment, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program could be helpful to these students.

Study purpose: This study investigated the education benefit of same-level PAL in medical students preparing for Korean Medical Licensing Examination (KMLE).

Research Methods

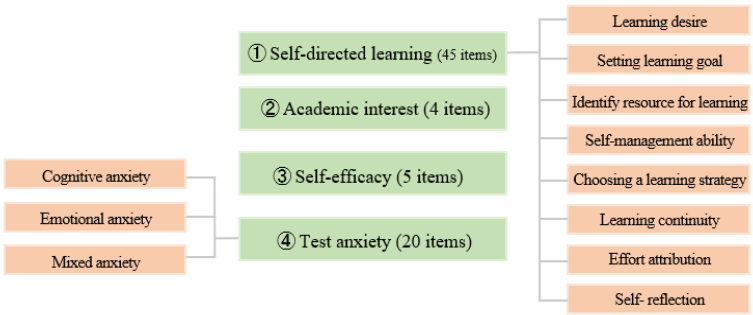
Setting and participants

A total of 42 sixth grade medical students at Sungkyunkwan University participated in the same-level PAL to prepare for the KMLE for four months. They formed 8 groups of 5-6 people to perform PAL activity. Each PAL group set their own study schedule and decided on their own how to manage their PAL study meetings. The PAL groups met once a week and during PAL activity, students shared what they have learned and taught each other through discussion. To check the PAL group progress before KMLE, the PAL groups were made to compete against each other in a mid-term tournament.

[Figure1] Mid-term tournaments to check what students have learned through PAL

Study design and variables

To evaluate the benefits of PAL, a pre- and post-survey were conducted. The questionnaire comprised four categories and each question was answered using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always).

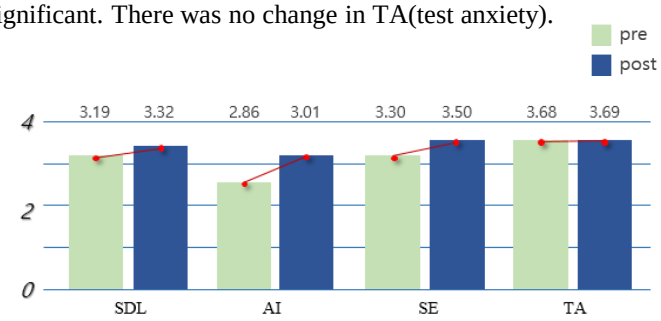


[Figure2] Construct of the questionnaire to evaluate the effect of PAL

Results

Result 1: Effects of PAL on medical students' learning attitude and perception

Survey outcomes showed a tendency of improvement in SDL(self-directed learning), AI(academic interest), and SE(self-efficacy), although all items were not statistically significant. There was no change in TA(test anxiety).

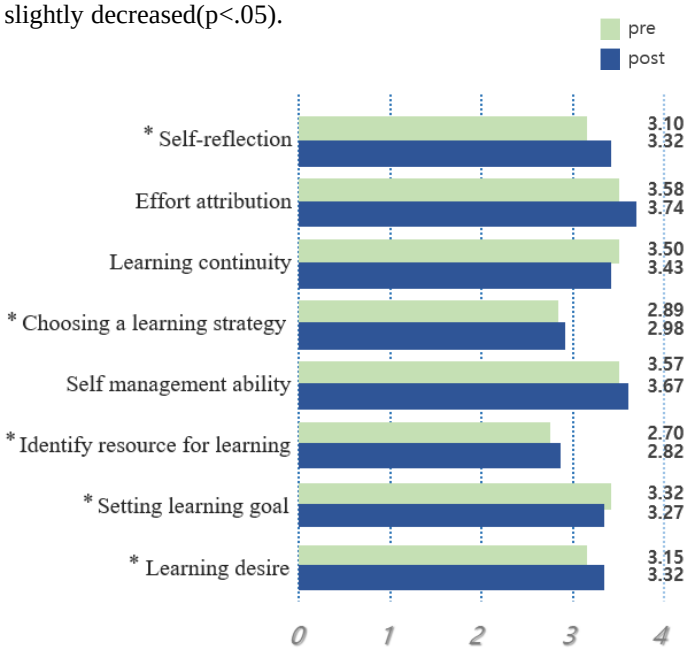


[Figure3] The effect of PAL activity

Result 2: Changes in learning variable of SDL

To analyze the effect on self-directed learning more in depth, this study focused on each of the eight variables under the SDL.

Among eight variables, 'self-reflection', 'choosing a learning strategy', 'identify resource for learning', and 'learning desire' were increased($p<.05$). However, 'Setting learning goal' slightly decreased($p<.05$).



[Figure4] Changes in SDL(Self-directed learning) variables

Conclusion

PAL had beneficial effects on medical students' learning attitude and perception on the process of preparing KMLE. Further researches with larger number of participants and longer duration of program are necessary.