

The Effect of Motivational Psychotherapy on Academic Motivation in Students

Ali Kazemi¹, Hosein Sahebdel^{2*}, Majid Ebrahimpour³

¹Department of Educational Psychology, Qaenat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaenat, Iran

²Department of Counseling, Qaenat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaenat, Iran

³Department of Psychology of Exceptional Children, Qaenat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaenat, Iran

Corresponding Author: Department of Counseling, Qaenat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaenat, Iran. Email: Pcsahebdel1365@gmail.com.

Received 2023 April 05; Accepted 2023 May 29.

Abstract

Background: Motivational psychotherapy has been investigated for its effects in the treatment of various disorders.

Objectives: This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of motivational psychotherapy in enhancing educational motivation among students.

Methods: This research employed a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design with a control group. The study population comprised all female second-grade high school students in Birjand City during the 2022-2023 academic year. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 30 participants, who were then randomly assigned to the experimental (15 participants) and control groups (15 participants). The Harter Educational Motivation Inventory (1981) was used to collect data.

Results: The mean age of the experimental group was 17.23 years. The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that motivational psychotherapy had a significant impact on students' educational motivation.

Conclusions: These findings emphasize the significance and effectiveness of motivational psychotherapy, offering new avenues for psychotherapists in the conceptualization and treatment of psychological issues in students.

Keywords: Motivational Psychotherapy; Educational Motivation; Students

1. Background

The ultimate goal of any educational system is the all-round development and promotion of students in cognitive, emotional, and social fields. Students are regarded as a vital segment of society, as they are the future builders of nations. Numerous factors influence the growth and development of students (1). One of the factors that can significantly impact students' academic performance is the psychological aspects related to their engagement in educational activities. The presence of psychological issues among students can impede their educational progress (2). High school students belong to the most crucial and sensitive age group—adolescence—and they grapple with various challenges (3). Adolescence is a sensitive period marked by the formation and expansion of coping behaviors and responses to environmental demands. Due to rapid physical, psychological, social, cultural, and cognitive changes, teenagers face numerous health issues (4). Typically, the physical, emotional, and psychological changes experienced during adolescence can trigger crises and can cause mental and psychologi-

cal problems, including depression (5, 6).

Students encounter various psychological and social challenges within the school environment, and the school can pose many difficulties for them (7). One such challenge that researchers have shown interest in is academic motivation. Academic motivation refers to the level of interest and motivation students have toward their studies. The structure of academic motivation encompasses behaviors related to learning and progress in education (8). In essence, fostering academic progress, as a driving motivation for advancement, represents an internal force that compels learners to critically evaluate their performance against the highest standards, strive for success, and enjoy the pleasure that comes with successful performance (9). Students' failure in subjects, lack of commitment among weaker students, and school dropouts are largely influenced by their low self-confidence and belief in their educational abilities. The decline in scores across various subjects is directly correlated with students' belief that they are incapable of mastering



those subjects or lack the desire to do so (1, 10). Academic motivation is, on one hand, influenced by environmental conditions and individuals' biological states, and, on the other hand, it is linked to their cognitions and personality traits (8). Psychologists have long posited that people's thoughts and the meaning they ascribe to events they experience can influence their behavior (11). Students with lower self-confidence in their abilities tend to experience diminished academic motivation (10). Having strong academic motivation can help students achieve academic success and lay the groundwork for positive behavior in school (8).

Given the aforementioned issues, it can be asserted that there is a pressing need for psychological interventions for students in today's context. In this regard, the emerging approach of motivational psychotherapy, as a native approach, has garnered the attention of researchers. Motivational psychotherapy posits that our beliefs about psychological issues can exacerbate them. In this approach, clients are guided to unearth underlying doubts about themselves and find the roots of both positive and negative thoughts in their lives (12). Motivational psychotherapy, as a native approach, is particularly focused on the challenges faced by teenagers and helps them overcome psychological issues using straightforward and practical techniques, with an emphasis on understanding the impact of the environment (13). In motivational psychotherapy, psychological problems are viewed as roles ingrained in a person's life script, and individuals may feel compelled to perform these roles flawlessly (12). By emphasizing concepts such as environmental mind, rich mind, selfishness, and lies, this approach provides a simple and actionable model for addressing psychological issues. Through this approach, it is possible to create a sense of efficacy and empowerment in clients' beliefs by creating double motivations for change (13). Given the novelty of this approach and its demonstrated effectiveness, it appears to be a rapid and beneficial treatment option for teenagers. Motivational psychotherapy has been shown to reduce risky behaviors among adolescents (14). Furthermore, it has proven effective in addressing issues such as readiness to commit suicide in adolescents, mental health of adolescents, child aggression, and depres-

sion among women with spouses who abuse substances (7, 15-18).

2. Objectives

Considering the imperative need to address the challenges faced by teenagers and the value of using local approaches in this field, the primary question we aim to answer in this research is whether motivational psychotherapy can enhance the academic motivation of students. Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate the impact of motivational psychotherapy on the academic motivation of students in Birjand City.

3. Methods

This research employed a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design with a control group. The research population consisted of all female second-grade high school students in Birjand City during the 2022 - 2023 academic year. The purposeful sampling method was used to select the sample. Inclusion criteria were being a volunteer and obtaining a low score (1 SD below the average) on the Harter Educational Motivation Inventory. Consequently, 30 participants were randomly chosen from those meeting the study's criteria, out of a total of 76 eligible individuals. These 30 participants were then divided into 2 groups: experimental (15 participants) and control groups (15 participants). The independent variable was performed on the experimental group over a period of 12 weeks, with one 90-minute session per week, while no intervention was performed in the control group during this timeframe. One week after the sessions, a posttest was conducted on both groups. The Harter Educational Motivation Inventory (1981) was used to collect data (19). The treatment sessions are summarized in Table 1.

The Harter questionnaire comprises 33 items and aims to assess academic motivation among students. The Harter original scale includes questions with 2 dimensions: one addressing internal motivation and the other external motivation. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1, never; 2, rarely; 3, sometimes; 4, often; 5, almost always). In this study, only the section related to internal motivation was used.

Table 1. Summary of Treatment Sessions (Adapted from Sahebdel and Tahan, 2022)

Session	The Content of the Session
1	Initial familiarization, discussing the goals, communicating, and building trust
2	Talking about problems and building trust
3	A new look at depression as a lie, description and explanation of the nature of the lie, and homework
4	Reviewing the previous session, identifying the lies we were told, analyzing our role in the life script, and homework
5	Reviewing the previous session, re-discuss and analyze more deeply your role as a depressed person, and homework
6	Reviewing the previous session, explanation of the concept of rich mind and group discussion, and homework
7	Reviewing the previous session, explaining the concept of enclosure and trying to break the first wall, and homework
8	Reviewing the previous session, breaking unhealthy habits, I can practice, breaking ugly lies, changing from outside to inside, changing appearance, and homework

9	Reviewing the previous session, breaking the walls of depression, external change and trying to get unstuck from the enclosure, and homework
10	Reviewing the previous session, try to reach higher levels of rich mind, find bigger goals, and homework
11	Reviewing the previous session, practice new roles, commitment to larger goals, and homework
12	Reviewing the previous session, celebrating success, and commitment to change

4. Results

The mean age of the experimental group was 17.23 years, while the control group had an average age of 17.36 years. In the experimental group, 4 students were in the 10th grade,

3 were in the 11th grade, and 8 were in the 12th grade. In the control group, there were 5 students in the 10th grade, 3 in the 11th grade, and 7 in the 12th grade. Demographic information for both groups is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Information

Variables	Experimental Group	Control Group	Total
Mean age	17.23	17.36	17.29
Number of participants in each grade			
10	4	5	9
11	3	3	6
12	8	7	15

The mean and SD of the experimental group in the pretest and posttest were 28.23 ± 6.65 and 28.87 ± 6.23 , respectively (Table 3). The Levene test was conducted to ensure

that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the 2 groups was met. The F statistic was 4.15 with a P value of 0.123 (Table 4).

Table 3. The Mean and SD of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pretest and Posttest

Dependent variable and Group	Mean \pm SD	
	Pretest	Posttest
Academic motivation		
Experimental	28.23 ± 6.65	64.37 ± 3.98
Control	28.87 ± 6.23	29.01 ± 4.34

Table 4. The Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Variable	Degrees of freedom 1	Degrees of freedom 2	P-Value
F			
4.15	1	28	0.123

According to Table 5, motivational psychotherapy has significantly reduced depression within the sample

group with 95% confidence ($P = 0.001$).

Table 5. Covariance Analysis of the Dependent Variable by Removing the Pretest Effect

Statistics	Total sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	P-Value
Pretest	179.76	1	179.76	18.27	0.000
Group	3057.23	1	3057/23	311.23	0.000
Error	265.34	27	9.82	-	-
Residual	2765.24	29	-	-	-

5. Discussion

Based on our results, motivational psychotherapy significantly increased the level of academic/educational motivation in the sample group. Our results are consistent with the results reported by Gheisari et al, Rahmanpour et al, Sahbedel, Sarvari et al, and Fakoor et al (2022) (7,14-18). Group counseling, by creating a rich environment and providing social support, appears to have a positive impact on the mo-

role of participants, allowing them to experience the benefits of empathy and support (20).

Motivational psychotherapy stands out for its time efficiency. Beyond conventional psychotherapy, this approach emphasizes achieving higher levels of mental health, purposefulness, and interpersonal skills (12). Some of the concepts in motivational psychotherapy have roots in Ira-

nian-Islamic mysticism, while others have been developed through theoretical studies within Iranian culture (12). Concepts such as “rich mind,” “personal circle,” “beautiful and ugly thoughts,” “environmental awareness,” and “self-love,” which are mixed with the cultural patterns of the Iranian people, can play a pivotal role in reshaping the lifestyles of Iranian clients. Motivational psychotherapy has created significant differences in treatment styles by using unique and culturally relevant techniques (13). Besides addressing psychological problems, motivational psychotherapy assists clients in charting a more favorable path for their future and becoming valuable contributors to society. This feature sets motivational psychotherapy apart from non-native approaches (12).

Given these concepts, it appears that motivational psychotherapy is a native approach, characterized by its emphasis on motivation in treatment, focus on transforming clients' lifestyles, use of simple, native, and comprehensible techniques, ease of implementation, and confronting clients with fundamental fears. The special qualities of therapists and the use of Iranian allegories further distinguish this approach, enhancing its effectiveness. One of its strengths lies in its ability to minimize problems and emphasize the development of strong and independent personalities in clients. Throughout the treatment, clients come to realize that many issues may merely be constructs of their minds, and magnifying these problems can exacerbate their depth. Motivational psychotherapy also stands out for its short treatment duration, achieving significant changes in clients within a relatively brief timeframe (17).

Concepts such as “rich mind,” “environmental mind,” and “life script” can expose clients to entirely different treatment conditions, completely challenging their thought patterns. Clients begin to question their beliefs and even their sense of self, and this doubt can be the beginning of a big change. Clients come to the conclusion that they may have been responsible for creating problems for themselves and experience a sense of inner empowerment to overcome them. In motivational psychotherapy, external changes are very important, as they are often easier to implement than internal changes. To help the sample group overcome their lies and break free from their roles, they were initially guided to change their appearance. Verbal changes, the way of dressing, and appearance can gradually change the environmental feedback they receive. Changing their tone of voice helps participants feel more empowered (15, 16). These changes allowed them to evolve from being weak and withdrawn to becoming active, self-confident individuals who could assert their desires with a confident voice and the courage to pursue their goals. In this way, the sample group managed to break down the false walls and overcome their belief in depression. However, it is worth noting that this research had some limitations, including its focus on adolescent girls and the absence of a follow-up phase during the treatment period.

5.1. Conclusions

In conclusion, motivational psychotherapy had a significant influence on educational motivation among students. These results emphasize the importance and effectiveness of motivational psychotherapy and offer a new perspective for psychotherapists in understanding and addressing psychological issues in students. funding: This study has no funding support

conflict of interest: Authors declare no conflict of interest

Authors contribution: Ali Kazemi, first Author: Responsible for Data collection and Original Draft. Hosein Sahebdel, Corresponding Author: Responsible for monitoring treatment implementation and interpretation of results. Majid Ebrahimpour, Advisor: Responsible for statistical analysis of data

Ethical Approval:

Birjand University of Medical Sciences ethics committee approved this study (IR.BUMS.REC.1401.452). Furthermore all the confidentiality conditions of the participants' information have been observed.

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