



The effectiveness of strength-based training on students' academic performance

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ABSTRACT

Background and Aim: One of the basic issues and problems of the educational life of people and the educational system of any country is the issue of academic decline and the low level of academic performance of the students of that country. Therefore, the aim of the research was to investigate the effectiveness of strength-based training on students' academic performance. **Methods:** The present research was quasi-experimental with an experimental group and a control group and a pre-test, post-test design. For this purpose, 16 people were selected from the statistical population of undergraduate students of Islamic Azad University of South Tehran Branch (Valiasr Complex) by random sampling and randomly assigned to two experimental (8 people) and control (8 people) groups and their academic performance Evaluated. These people participated in Smith's (2004) strength-based training sessions individually in 10 90-minute sessions. The data were analyzed using the univariate analysis of covariance test using SPSS statistical analysis software. **Results:** The findings showed that academic performance ($P < 0.001$, $F = 41.018$) increased significantly in the experimental group. **Conclusion:** The results showed that the use of strength-based training can help improve students' academic performance.



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Introduction

One of the basic issues and problems of the educational life of people and the educational system of any country is the issue of academic decline and the low level of academic performance of the students of that country (Nobrian & Nowrozi, 2011). In other words, one of the most important periods of life is the period of education, which affects other dimensions of life, and one of the major problems of education and educational systems is the low level of academic performance (Giunchiglia et al., 2018). Students of any country are considered that country's intellectual and spiritual capital. Investigating students' specific issues, successful education and ensuring their physical and mental health are among the most important goals of government educational planners (Akhavan Tafti & Valizadeh, 2006). Student period is an important and challenging period for students. During this period, all students must have more mental health and self-reliance due to facing more stressful factors (such as the weight of courses, the long duration of the study period, etc.) and finally, achieve in their profession (Sarmadi, Saif, Talebi and Abedi, 2010).

Academic performance means all the educational and research activities and efforts that students show in order to acquire science and knowledge in the university, as one of the important goals of the higher education system and universities, it has always been the attention of policy makers and decision makers (Razeghi, Salehi Omran, and Kazemi, 2020). Student's academic performance is not only a significant issue for parents and those involved in higher education in the country but also for all people interested in the growth and prosperity of the youth and the progress of the society

A strength-based approach involves clients and therapists working together to use the client's strengths and strengths to create a sense of purpose and happiness. The basis of the strength-based approach is the belief that people deal with challenges depends on their view of themselves and whether they see their strengths or weaknesses (Drabani & Parsakia, 2022). Instead of using the traditional medical model that emphasizes pathology, focusing on the problems and failures of people with mental illnesses, a strength-based approach allows professionals to recognize that everyone has a unique set of strengths and strengths that enable them to rely on them to acknowledge that problems can be

overcome (Xie, 2013). Everyone has personality strengths and main patterns of thinking and behavior that are positive and benefit the person and the people around them when used intentionally. Counselors who focus on empowerment believe using it can make it easier to change behaviors and improve life (Drabani & Parsakia, 2022). Professionals work with clients to identify strengths that can be used to help clients cope with their problems in the present. After that, a program can be developed to build on the strengths. In this process, clients cooperate with the therapist in setting the program's goals and achieving a detailed program (Xie, 2013).

In today's world, academic performance is of particular importance. Advanced and progressing societies emphasize performance, competition and victory (Pournakash Tehrani, Fadavi Ardakani, and Nasri Tajabadi, 2017). The strength-based approach is one of the new approaches in psychology that has attracted the attention of educational psychology researchers. However, so far, its effectiveness on students' academic performance has yet to be investigated. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the effectiveness of strength-based training on the academic performance of students of Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch (Valiasr Complex).

Method

The present research was quasi-experimental with an experimental group and a control group and a pre-test, post-test design. For this purpose, 16 people were selected from the statistical population of undergraduate students of Islamic Azad University of South Tehran Branch (Valiasr Complex) by random sampling and randomly assigned to two experimental (8 people) and control (8 people) groups and their academic performance Evaluated. These people participated in Smith's (2004) strength-based training sessions individually in 10 90-minute sessions. The data were analyzed using the univariate analysis of covariance test using SPSS statistical analysis software.

Research Tools

1. Academic performance. In this research, to evaluate the academic performance of the students, their academic semester grade point average was taken.

2. Strength-based training. The educational package of competency-based counseling was prepared and compiled based on Smith's treatment protocol (2006).

Results

The average score of the experimental group in the pre-test stage (before the intervention) was 18.03 and

the standard deviation of the scores was 0.84. The average score of this group in the post-test phase (after the intervention) was 18.87, with a standard deviation of 0.56. The average score of the control group in the pre-test stage (before the intervention) was 17.84 and the standard deviation of the scores was 0.83. The average score of this group in the post-test phase (after the intervention) was 17.70 and the standard deviation of the scores was 1.66. There is no significant difference between the averages of the two groups in the pre-test stage, and the average scores of the experimental group increased. In contrast, the scores of the control group did not change much.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test show that the data of both experimental and control groups have a normal distribution, and the results of the Levine test also indicate that the condition of equality of variances in the research variable is met. Therefore, univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used.

The results of univariate covariance analysis in the experimental and control groups show that strength-based training was effective on the academic performance of the experimental group ($P < 0.01$) with an effect size of 0.774.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of strength-based education on the academic performance of students of Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch (Valiasr Complex). The results of data analysis showed that strength-based training increased students' academic performance.

One of the factors that have influenced students' academic performance in this approach is the hope chest fan because hope can motivate people and make them work harder to get higher grades. Also, motivational interviewing makes life easier. Motivational interviewing is person-centered and collaborative guidance to extract and empower the fundamental motivation for change. The four fundamental principles of motivational interviewing are: expressing empathy, adapting to resistance, supporting self-efficacy and expanding dualities or contradictions. Expressing empathy refers to understanding the patient's point of view and accepting his contradictions. Resistance adaptation emphasizes avoidance of conflict and corrective reflection, which originates from coercively guiding the patient to make the right decisions to correct perceived problems. Supporting self-efficacy includes fostering clients' belief in their strengths to create change. In the development of discrepancies, the conflict between the client's current behaviors and his or her more broad goals or values is referred to (Chang, Burke, & Goodman, 2010). During the

Hope Box stage, counselors seek to help clients change their attitudes about the difficulty and fill them with a sense of possibility. Counselors use narrative strategies so that clients can redefine their life stories and visualize themselves as survivors instead of victims (Smith, 2006). Dr. Joel Wong (2006), a psychologist and professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Development at Indiana University in Bloomington, describes the four stages of a strengths-based approach to therapy, one of which is dedicated to hope: 1) In the interpretation stage, the therapist and Clients work together to identify and understand clients' unique strengths, to identify or reveal them to clients. 2) The next stage is the visualization stage, where clients discover their goals, hopes and dreams for the future. 3) The next stage is the empowerment stage, in which clients identify methods to use their capstrengths to achieve their goals. The final stage is the stage of transformation in which the authorities identify and welcome new growth and changes and plan to continue life (Drabani & Parsakia, 2022).

One of the steps of strength-based education is to identify strengths. Psychologists of this approach teach clients to tell their life stories with an attitude based on empowerment. Viewing yourself as someone who has managed to survive (rather than seeing yourself as a victim of bad parents or a bad family) has a powerful effect during psychotherapy. Therapy may be the first time a person can tell their life story. Therefore, effective empowering psychotherapy must be based on the narrative of the client's life story (Smith, 2005). The therapist asks the client to describe the positive things that he wants to continue in his relationship and helps the client identify his strengths (Smith, 2005). Identifying strengths and using them in other treatment stages can help raise academic performance.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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