

The Impact of Help-Seeking Training and Self-Compassion Training on Academic Achievement Motivation

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to investigate the impact of help-seeking training and self-compassion training on the academic achievement motivation of high school girls.

Methods and Materials: This research is a quasi-experimental study conducted in 2022. To examine this study, educational packages of help-seeking strategies based on the Nelson-Le Gall (1981) model and self-compassion training based on the Neff (2013) model were used, along with the Hermans Achievement Motivation Questionnaire (1970). The study population consisted of female high school students in the city of Sabzevar. A total of 45 subjects were randomly selected and divided into three groups of 15 (two experimental groups and one control group). Initially, the research instruments were administered as a pre-test to both groups. The first experimental group received 10 sessions of help-seeking training, and the second experimental group received 10 sessions of self-compassion training, while the control group did not receive any educational intervention. After the end of the 10 training sessions, the research instruments were administered again as a post-test. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including the analysis of variance statistical method.

Findings: The results of this study showed that there is a significant difference between the impact of help-seeking training and self-compassion training on academic achievement motivation.

Conclusion: Thus, it can be concluded that help-seeking training and self-compassion training can be effectively used in academic and educational settings.

Keywords: Help-Seeking Training, Self-Compassion, Academic Achievement Motivation.

1. Introduction

In educational systems, students' academic progress and decline are of significant importance, and the discovery and study of variables affecting these criteria lead to a better understanding and prediction of factors effective in schools. Therefore, examining variables related to academic progress is one of the very important topics and concerns of educational systems (Abdollahi et al., 2022). In the educational field, motivation is a three-dimensional phenomenon that includes personal beliefs about the ability to perform desired activities, the reasons or goals of the individual for performing that activity, and the emotional reaction associated with performing that activity (Abdollahi et al., 2022; Falakdin, 2021; Safarzadeh & Jayervand, 2019). Regarding high school students, academic achievement motivation is particularly important, and with this motivation, students find the necessary drive to successfully complete a task, reach an educational goal, or achieve a certain level of competence in their work, ultimately achieving the necessary success in learning and academic progress (Soleymani et al., 2023; Weissenfels et al., 2023).

Students' motivation in the classroom is one of the most important issues that specialists in this field have focused on. The reason for this importance goes back to the role of motivation in human behaviors. According to related theories, students' motivation can significantly predict their academic progress, and the necessity of education and its role in the economic and cultural development of societies is also evident (Torbatinezhad et al., 2022). Educational psychology is a field that specifically deals with this topic and is one of the controversial subjects in the classroom and school environment. This topic is part of the specialized courses for students of educational sciences and can also be useful for managers, teachers, and parents who want to help strengthen their students' motivation. Achievement motivation is one of the most important acquired motives of any individual, first introduced by Murray, which is the individual's tendency to overcome obstacles, strive for attaining superiority, and maintain high standards. Those with high achievement motivation strive for perfection and improvement in their performance. They are conscientious, undertake challenging tasks, and engage in activities that allow for the assessment of their progress either in comparison to others or based on other criteria. As a result, these individuals have high self-esteem and prefer personal responsibility to be tangibly aware of the outcomes of their

work (Shirdel et al., 2013; Tahmasbipour et al., 2021; Torbatinezhad et al., 2022).

Help-seeking can be an adaptive strategy that has led researchers to suggest to parents to increase students' academic motivation through effective help-seeking training when needed (Randles & Finnegan, 2021; Sturman et al., 2020). Help-seeking can make significant positive changes in the process of solving academic problems, and equipping students with help-seeking strategies can have beneficial results in all educational situations, resulting from students' efficacy abilities and stress resource control (Cho & Sohlberg, 2015; Eisenberg et al., 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003). Academic help-seeking is one of the most important learning strategies, with goal orientation and self-worth as significant factors in this field. One of the possible interventions in these situations is to facilitate the formation of help-seeking behavior, enabling individuals to address problems and receive necessary academic and emotional support from others, such as fellow students and teachers, in difficult and emergency situations. Students' academic adaptability stems from help-seeking skills. Fatherly support and acceptance play a significant role in explaining and predicting students' help-seeking behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Xu et al., 2023).

Help-seeking can serve as a self-regulated learning strategy and as an important characteristic of learners, stimulating students and improving their academic performance. Increasing knowledge about how to seek help, its process, and various strategies strengthens students' metacognitive abilities. Help-seeking strategies can play a significant role in learning, and through teaching help-seeking, students can be helped to manage and learn academic subjects (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Benjet et al., 2023). Zimmerman's research (2008) shows that help-seeking is one of the most important resource management strategies that help students regulate and manage the available facilities in the classroom and surrounding environment. In other words, help-seeking is defined as a strategy for overcoming academic stress. As such, help-seeking enables students to identify their learning issues and academic stressors and seek questions and assistance from others to overcome them. Furthermore, Ryan and colleagues (2001) expanded the help-seeking model based on the Nelson-Le Gall (1981) pattern, examining its effects on educational and behavioral processes and outcomes of students (Randles & Finnegan, 2021; Xu et al., 2023).

Self-compassion is a component of mental health aimed at individual care and guardianship in facing difficulties and

deficiencies, resulting in more balanced reactions to environmental stresses (John Jamir Benzon et al., 2022; Soleymany & Sarifi, 2023). Self-compassion means not avoiding pain and suffering but accepting it with kindness and creating a sense of better living rooted in the experience of completeness (Özer, 2022; Shin et al., 2023). A part of mindful self-compassion includes the individual clearly observing their flaws instead of ignoring them. Self-compassion is positively related to mental health (Kazemi Rezaei et al., 2023; Maynard et al., 2023; Movahedrad et al., 2023). There is a significant relationship between the positive components of self-compassion (self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) and the emotion regulation of students, and self-compassion acts as a positive psychological trait towards improving conditions, accepting abilities, and enhancing individuals' psychological well-being (Campagna, 2022; Chan et al., 2022; John Jamir Benzon et al., 2022; Kazemi Rezaei et al., 2023; Maynard et al., 2023; Mesbahi et al., 2020; Movahedrad et al., 2023).

Therefore, based on the studies conducted, it is clear that few studies have examined the the impact of help-seeking training and self-compassion training on students' academic achievement motivation. Therefore, considering the above introduction, the present study seeks to answer the question of whether help-seeking training and self-compassion training have an impact on academic achievement motivation.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This research is a quasi-experimental study conducted in 2021. The statistical population includes all female high school students in the city of Sabzevar, from which samples were purposefully and completely randomly selected into three groups of 15 individuals.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Achievement Motivation

This questionnaire consists of 29 incomplete sentences, followed by options to complete them. A higher score represents higher achievement motivation, while a lower score represents lower achievement motivation. Each response is scored between 1 to 4. In this questionnaire, questions 1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 20, 23, 27, 28, and 29 (total of 12 questions) are negatively worded, with options a (score 1), b (score 2), c (score 3), and d (score 4) allocated.

Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, and 26 (total of 17 questions) are positively worded, with options a (score 4), b (score 3), c (score 2), and d (score 1) allocated. The minimum and maximum scores for this questionnaire are 29 and 116, respectively. Hermans used content validation based on previous research on achievement motivation for validity and also calculated the correlation coefficient of each question with achievement-oriented behaviors, with coefficients ranging from 0.57 to 0.30. For reliability, Hermans used test-retest and Cronbach's alpha methods, showing a coefficient of 0.84, and after three weeks, a retest equivalent of 0.82 (Torbatinezhad et al., 2022).

2.3. Interventions

2.3.1. Help-Seeking Training

The help-seeking training protocol is designed based on the Nelson-Le Gall (1981) model, which emphasizes strategic help-seeking as a key component of successful learning and problem-solving. This training likely includes the following components across its 10 sessions:

1. Introduction to Help-Seeking: Explaining the concept of help-seeking, its importance in academic settings, and dispelling myths that seeking help is a sign of weakness.
2. Identifying Help Sources: Teaching students how to identify appropriate sources of help, including peers, teachers, and online resources.
3. Asking for Help Effectively: Skills training on how to ask for help in a clear, concise, and respectful manner.
4. Evaluating Help: Learning to assess the quality of help received and how to integrate it effectively into one's learning process.
5. Overcoming Barriers to Help-Seeking: Addressing psychological barriers such as fear of judgment or embarrassment, and providing strategies to overcome them.
6. Practice Sessions: Role-playing and simulation exercises to practice help-seeking in a controlled environment.
7. Feedback and Reflection: Sessions dedicated to sharing experiences of seeking help, receiving feedback, and reflecting on the learning process.
8. Help-Seeking and Self-Regulated Learning: Integrating help-seeking into broader self-regulated learning strategies and study habits.

9. Creating a Supportive Help-Seeking Environment: Strategies for fostering an educational environment that encourages and supports help-seeking.
10. Review and Future Planning: Reviewing key concepts and skills learned, and planning how to apply help-seeking strategies in future academic endeavors.

2.3.2. *Self-Compassion Training*

The self-compassion training protocol is based on the model developed by Neff (2013), focusing on cultivating a compassionate and non-judgmental attitude towards oneself, especially in the face of failure or difficulty. This training likely encompasses the following components across its 10 sessions (Neff & Beretvas, 2013):

1. Understanding Self-Compassion: Introduction to the concept of self-compassion and its three core components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.
2. Self-Kindness: Exercises and practices to cultivate kindness towards oneself, rather than harsh self-criticism.
3. Common Humanity: Activities that highlight the shared human experience of imperfection and struggle, reducing feelings of isolation.
4. Mindfulness and Emotional Awareness: Techniques for becoming more aware of and present with one’s emotional state without over-identification.
5. Overcoming Resistance: Addressing resistance to self-compassion, including fears that it might lead to self-indulgence or lack of accountability.

6. Self-Compassion in Daily Life: Strategies for applying self-compassion in everyday situations, especially those involving academic challenges.
7. Cultivating Resilience: Using self-compassion as a tool for building emotional resilience in the face of setbacks or failures.
8. Practicing Forgiveness: Exercises focused on self-forgiveness for past mistakes or perceived inadequacies.
9. Self-Compassion and Relationships: Exploring the impact of self-compassion on interpersonal relationships and communication.
10. Integration and Commitment: Consolidating the skills and attitudes developed through the training and committing to ongoing self-compassion practice.

2.4. *Data analysis*

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including the analysis of variance statistical method.

3. Findings and Results

Descriptive findings indicate that the mean scores of the help-seeking experimental group in the post-test of achievement motivation have increased, and the standard deviation and variance of scores in the achievement motivation variables have decreased. Thus, it can be seen that help-seeking training has led to an increase in achievement motivation (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Findings

Group	Index	Pre-test	Post-test
Help-Seeking Training	Mean	73.91	80.24
	SD	9.30	10.17
Self-Compassion Training	Mean	75.42	81.33
	SD	10.92	10.61
Control	Mean	74.99	74.32
	SD	9.83	10.44

The results also show that the mean scores in the self-compassion experimental group in the academic achievement motivation variable have increased, and the standard deviation and variance of scores in the achievement motivation variable for the self-compassion experimental group have decreased. Thus, it can be seen that self-

compassion training has led to an increase in achievement motivation.

The results for the control group, which did not receive any training, show minor changes in mean, standard deviation, and variance in the pre-test and post-test, with no significant difference observed.

Table 2

Results of Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	p
Self-Compassion	4214.33	1	4214.33	7.68	0.06
Help-Seeking	4355.81	1	4355.81	7.91	0.05

As observed in Table 2, at the significance level of $p < 0.01$, the calculated F-values for between-group effect show significant differences. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the mean achievement motivation scores in the two educational groups of help-seeking and self-compassion. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Consequently, it can be stated that the help-seeking and self-compassion training methods have had an impact on achievement motivation.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This research examined the impact of help-seeking and self-compassion training on academic achievement motivation. The findings of the study demonstrated that both help-seeking and self-compassion training significantly affected academic achievement motivation. Specifically, the results indicated that achievement motivation increased among students who received the help-seeking training package. Additionally, self-compassion training led to an increase in achievement motivation among students. These results are aligning with the previous findings (Janbozorgi et al., 2020; John Jamir Benzon et al., 2022; Kazemi Rezaei et al., 2023; Khedri et al., 2022; Noroozi et al., 2021; Özer, 2022; Peyamannia, 2021; Peymannia et al., 2018).

The research findings underscore the significant role of psychological interventions, such as help-seeking and self-compassion training, in enhancing academic achievement motivation. This aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of motivational psychology, suggesting that students' beliefs about their abilities and their emotional reactions to academic challenges significantly influence their motivation to achieve. The increase in achievement motivation following help-seeking training supports the notion that fostering adaptive help-seeking behaviors can empower students to overcome academic challenges more effectively. This is consistent with the model proposed by Nelson-Le Gall (1981), emphasizing the importance of strategic help-seeking in academic success (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Umucu et al., 2022).

Similarly, the positive impact of self-compassion training on achievement motivation highlights the beneficial effects of nurturing a kind and understanding attitude towards oneself, especially in the face of difficulties and failures. Self-compassion provides emotional resilience, allowing students to maintain a positive self-concept and motivation even when encountering setbacks. This finding is particularly relevant in the educational context, where students often face high levels of stress and pressure to perform. By promoting self-compassion, educators can help students develop a more supportive and forgiving self-attitude, which, in turn, can enhance their motivation to learn and succeed (Noroozi et al., 2021).

Moreover, the research supports the broader educational psychology literature that emphasizes the role of emotional and psychological factors in academic achievement. It contributes to a growing body of evidence suggesting that interventions aimed at improving students' psychological well-being and adaptive coping strategies can have a tangible impact on their educational outcomes.

In conclusion, the study not only confirms the efficacy of help-seeking and self-compassion training in enhancing academic achievement motivation but also underscores the importance of integrating psychological support mechanisms into educational systems. These findings suggest that educators and policymakers should consider adopting such training programs as part of a comprehensive approach to improving student achievement. By addressing the psychological dimensions of learning and achievement, educational institutions can better support students in realizing their full academic potential, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and success.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

The study faced limitations such as the scarcity of related research both domestically and internationally, lack of sufficient student motivation requiring significant effort for questionnaire participation, non-cooperation from some officials, students' cautiousness in questionnaire completion, and financial constraints. Future research directions could

expand by involving lower secondary and university students, broadening the sample size across other provinces, and incorporating teacher and professor opinions. Implications suggest integrating psychological support mechanisms into educational systems, emphasizing the importance of help-seeking and self-compassion training to enhance academic achievement motivation and overall student well-being.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally.

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