

Determining the Effectiveness of Responsibility Training Based on Choice Theory on Students' Academic Motivation and Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to determine the effectiveness of responsibility training based on choice theory on students' academic motivation and academic performance.

Methods and Materials: The research design of the present study was applied in terms of purpose and quasi-experimental in terms of method, with a pre-test-post-test design, including an experimental group and a control group, along with a three-month follow-up phase. The statistical population of the present study included all students referred to counseling centers in a private specialized clinic for child and adolescent counseling and psychotherapy in District 10 of Tehran. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups: experimental (n = 15) and control (n = 15) through convenience sampling. For the experimental group, the responsibility training program based on choice theory was implemented according to the protocol developed by Mirsalar Bakhshi (2019). To collect data, research instruments including Vallerand's Academic Motivation Scale (1998) and students' grade point averages (GPA) were used. Data analysis was conducted in two sections: descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential. In the descriptive section, frequency distribution tables were used, and in the inferential section, data analysis was performed using mixed ANOVA with repeated measures and Bonferroni post hoc test. Data analysis was carried out using a computer and SPSS software version 26.

Findings: The findings indicate that the significance level shows that responsibility training based on choice theory had a significant impact on the dependent variables of the study, namely academic performance ($F = 25.80, P < 0.01$) and academic motivation ($F = 23.70, P < 0.01$). The changes resulting from this intervention were significant in the three time intervals of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The effectiveness of this intervention was also sustained in the follow-up phase according to the Bonferroni post hoc test.

Conclusion: Based on the available findings, it can be concluded that responsibility training based on choice theory can be used to increase academic motivation and improve students' academic performance. Therefore, it is suggested that educational workshops on this method be held for specialists.

Keywords: *Responsibility Training, Choice Theory, Academic Motivation, Academic Performance.*

1. Introduction

Education is one of the most important institutions in a society, capable of providing the groundwork for individuals' comprehensive development. Generally, the cultivation of individual talents, the strengthening of the foundations of collective life, and the creation of understanding among people occur through education (Cullen, 2011). Contrary to past beliefs that an individual's learning ability was thought to be solely a function of their intelligence and innate talents, recent years have seen a growing consensus among psychologists that, while innate factors like intelligence and talent play a role in learning, other non-intrinsic factors are also significant. This perspective no longer views learning as a single-dimensional phenomenon. In this regard, variables such as academic motivation, academic emotions, and academic self-concept have attracted the attention of education specialists and psychologists (Adolph & Berger, 2015).

Academic performance, which encompasses all educational and research activities and efforts made by students in pursuit of knowledge at the university level, has always been a critical objective of higher education systems and universities, drawing the attention of policymakers and decision-makers (Razeghi et al., 2020). Students' academic performance is not only a significant concern for parents and higher education stakeholders but also for everyone interested in the growth and flourishing of youth and societal progress. There are different definitions of academic performance and methods for measuring it, which generally fall into two categories: objective and subjective (Parsakia et al., 2022). In research conducted on the evaluation of academic performance, course grades or overall academic grades have been considered key indicators of academic performance (Ghaffari et al., 2015). One of the criteria for the effectiveness of any higher education system is the academic progress of its learners. Consequently, every educational system seeks to identify the factors influencing learners' academic progress to enhance and achieve its intended goals and strategies (Ghaffari et al., 2015; Parsakia et al., 2022; Sivrikaya, 2019).

One concept that has garnered significant interest from specialists in education and research in recent years in relation to academic achievement is motivation. Academic motivation answers the question of why learners attend school (Arias et al., 2022). In any educational system, the level of students' academic motivation is one of the indicators of success in scientific activities, reflecting the amount of school-based learning an individual acquires (Abdi & Rostami, 2017). The motivational structure is an important factor that influences social changes and societal transformation. Motivation is the desire to engage in work or to move towards the application of specific behaviors (Abdelrahman, 2020). Academic motivation has been described as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral determinant that shapes a student's investment in education and commitment (Sivrikaya, 2019). Moreover, academic motivation is defined as the factor that most significantly impacts students' performance compared to other factors (Schunk et al., 2014). This component is the most important foundation for students' progress and is a key factor in the educational process, yet it has not been sufficiently emphasized within the educational system (Zamani Kokhalo et al., 2021). Academic motivation is a broad term that refers to the needs, drives, and factors that lead students to participate in an educational environment (Arias et al., 2022). Academic motivation is one of the most important resources that determine the direction, intensity, and behavior of a student in the learning process and is a key trait that influences all student activities. A decrease in academic motivation can lead to pessimism, anxiety, and a decline in academic performance (Schunk et al., 2014).

Glasser (2005) defines responsibility as the ability to meet one's needs in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to meet their own needs. Glasser, the founder of "Reality Therapy," argued that an individual, by considering "reality," "responsibility," and "right or wrong actions," could overcome their problems, and if these three principles are achieved, it indicates the person's mental health (Nikbakht et al., 2014; Shafie et al., 2019). In simple terms, Choice Theory is concerned with choices and the how and why of making them. Choice Theory explains how an individual, as a human being, chooses behaviors to achieve

what they want. According to this theory, all that is done is a behavior, and all behaviors are intentional and internally motivated. This contrasts with the view of those who believe that humans live in a world of external control and are driven by external factors (Abdi Dehkordi et al., 2019; Abdollahzadeh, 2020; Asani, 2023). Given the principles presented in Choice Theory and Glasser's emphasis on responsibility, and considering that the effectiveness of responsibility training based on Choice Theory has not been explored in the academic field, as well as the importance of this developmental period, especially academic issues, it can be concluded that the results of the present study are significant and can be utilized in practical situations, including academic counseling and child and adolescent therapy, and also in future research. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of responsibility training based on Choice Theory on students' academic motivation and academic performance.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The research design of the present study was applied in terms of purpose and quasi-experimental in terms of research method, with a pre-test-post-test design including an experimental group and a control group, accompanied by a three-month follow-up phase. The statistical population of the present study included all students referred to counseling centers in a private specialized clinic for child and adolescent counseling and psychotherapy in District 10 of Tehran. Therefore, considering the quasi-experimental design used in the study, a sample size of 30 was selected and randomly assigned to two groups: experimental ($n = 15$) and control ($n = 15$) through convenience sampling. The inclusion criteria were: enrollment in primary school, no diagnosis of psychiatric or chronic physical illness, and parental consent. The exclusion criteria were: lack of cooperation for more than two sessions and parental dissatisfaction with continuing participation in the sessions. For the experimental group, the responsibility training program based on Choice Theory was implemented according to the protocol developed by Mirsalar Bakhshi (2019). To collect data, research instruments including Vallerand's Academic Motivation Scale (1998) and students' grade point averages (GPA) were used. Participants in both groups completed the questionnaires at the beginning of the study, after which the experimental group received responsibility training based on Choice Theory, while the

control group did not receive any intervention. After the intervention, both groups completed the questionnaires again. Additionally, after the completion of the study, the control group also participated in the responsibility training sessions based on Choice Theory.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Academic Performance

In this study, academic performance was measured using students' grade point averages in mid-term and final exams.

2.2.2. Academic Motivation

The Academic Motivation Scale was developed and validated by Vallerand and his colleagues in 1998. This scale is based on the self-determination theory and contains 28 five-option items based on the Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scale includes three components: intrinsic motivation (with 12 items) (items: 2, 9, 16, 23, 6, 13, 20, 27, 4, 11, 18, and 25), extrinsic motivation (with 12 items) (items: 3, 10, 17, 24, 7, 14, 21, 28, 1, 8, 15, and 22), and amotivation (with four items) (items 5, 12, 19, 26). In scoring the questionnaire, scores ranging from 28 to 56 indicate amotivation, 56 to 84 indicate low motivation, 84 to 112 indicate moderate motivation, and 112 to 140 indicate high motivation. The creators of this questionnaire confirmed its validity and reliability in the initial study for its development. In Iran, after confirmation of content validity and localization by specialists, its reliability was confirmed using the test-retest method with a two-week interval ($r = 0.71$) and internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha calculation ($\alpha = 0.88$). The reliability of the localized version was also confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (Naseh et al., 2017; Zamani Kokhalo et al., 2021).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Responsibility Training Program Based on Choice Theory

In this study, the eight-session responsibility training program based on Choice Theory was implemented in 8 group sessions of 90 minutes each (Abdi Dehkordi et al., 2019; Abdollahzadeh, 2020; Asani, 2023; Eslami Hasanabadi et al., 2023; Ghoreishi & Behboodi, 2017; Nowruzpoor et al., 2021; Shafie et al., 2019) for the experimental group.

Session 1: Introduction

In the first session, participants are introduced to the program and its objectives. The facilitator explains the purpose of the sessions, addressing participants' expectations and answering any questions they might have. The potential challenges and possibilities that may arise during the course of the intervention are discussed. Participants are given a homework assignment to reflect on the topics discussed and to decide whether they wish to continue participating in the sessions.

Session 2: Understanding Human Needs

The second session begins with a review of the previous session, followed by a discussion of the homework and any issues that have arisen. The main focus of this session is on explaining the concept of human needs according to Choice Theory. After a brief break, participants work on identifying and ranking their basic needs using a questionnaire. The session concludes with a summary, a session evaluation form, and a homework assignment to identify unmet needs using a provided worksheet.

Session 3: Exploring the "Quality World"

This session starts with a review of the previous session and homework. Participants are then introduced to the concept of their "Quality World"—the ideal world they envision. The discussion focuses on what actions they have taken to achieve their Quality World and how conflicts between desires and reality can lead to choosing depressive behaviors, which in turn can decrease academic performance and motivation. The facilitator helps participants begin to change the mental images in their Quality World. The session ends with a summary, a session evaluation form, and a homework assignment to draw their Quality World using a questionnaire.

Session 4: Components of Behavior

The fourth session begins with a review of the previous session and the homework. The group is introduced to the four components of behavior: thoughts, feelings, physiology, and actions. Through chart discussions, the facilitator explains how individuals might choose depressive behaviors. The session concludes with a summary, a session evaluation form, and a homework assignment where participants are asked to illustrate some of their ineffective behaviors on a diagram.

Session 5: Evaluating Current Behaviors

This session starts with a review of the previous session and a discussion of the homework and any issues that arose. Participants evaluate the behaviors they have used so far to achieve their Quality World. The session wraps up with a

summary, a session evaluation form, and a homework assignment that asks participants to reflect on their behaviors and complete the provided worksheet.

Session 6: Creating New Behaviors

The sixth session begins with a review of the previous session and a discussion of the homework. The facilitator suggests options for replacing current behaviors and explains how participants can rely on their creative mental system to generate new and more effective behaviors. The session ends with a summary, a session evaluation form, and a homework assignment to use their creativity to develop new and effective behaviors.

Session 7: Introducing New Strategies

In this session, the facilitator and participants review the previous session and discuss the homework. The facilitator, along with other group members, presents new strategies for behavior change. After a brief break, the session concludes with a summary, a session evaluation form, and a homework assignment in which participants are asked to write down their previous disruptive behaviors on one side of a sheet and new reactions on the other, with the goal of replacing the old behaviors.

Session 8: Review and Closure

The final session begins with a review of the previous session and a discussion of the homework. Participants address any unfinished business and review the content of the previous sessions. After a brief break, the facilitator provides recommendations and suggestions for the end of the group intervention. The session concludes with a final summary and the completion of a session evaluation form.

2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two sections: descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential. In the descriptive section, frequency distribution tables were used, and in the inferential section, data analysis was performed using mixed ANOVA with repeated measures and Bonferroni post hoc test. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS software version 26.

3. Findings and Results

In terms of demographic data, the mean age and standard deviation of participants in the experimental group were 15.81 years ($SD = 1.62$), while in the control group, the mean age was 15.23 years ($SD = 2.10$). The descriptive findings from the data collection are reported in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Scores for Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Group	Stage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Performance	Control	Pre-test	15.79	1.61
		Post-test	16.93	1.52
		Follow-up	16.80	1.70
	Experimental	Pre-test	15.34	1.55
		Post-test	15.29	1.81
		Follow-up	15.21	1.67
Academic Motivation	Control	Pre-test	65.33	6.49
		Post-test	76.84	7.03
		Follow-up	75.42	7.11
	Experimental	Pre-test	64.92	6.76
		Post-test	65.03	7.01
		Follow-up	64.73	6.37

Based on the contents of Table 1, the scores for the research variables in the control group did not change significantly, while the mean scores for both variables in the experimental group increased. To test the significance of the effectiveness of the responsibility training program based on Choice Theory on the experimental group, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures was used across three stages. First, the necessary

assumptions were tested. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data were normally distributed. Additionally, the results of Levene's test confirmed the homogeneity of variances, and Mauchly's test confirmed the assumption of sphericity at a significance level of 0.01. Next, the results of the multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures across the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages are shown.

Table 2

Mixed ANOVA with Repeated Measures at Three Stages

Variable	Group	Test Name	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Significance	Effect Size (η^2)
Academic Performance	Time	Pillai's Trace	0.47	28.81	2	27	0.000	0.47
		Wilks' Lambda	0.46	28.81	2	27	0.000	0.47
		Hotelling's Trace	6.73	28.81	2	27	0.000	0.47
		Roy's Largest Root	6.73	28.81	2	27	0.000	0.47
	Time*Group	Pillai's Trace	0.44	25.80	2	27	0.000	0.44
		Wilks' Lambda	0.42	25.80	2	27	0.000	0.44
		Hotelling's Trace	5.98	25.80	2	27	0.000	0.44
		Roy's Largest Root	5.98	25.80	2	27	0.000	0.44
Academic Motivation	Time	Pillai's Trace	0.40	23.70	2	27	0.000	0.40
		Wilks' Lambda	0.39	23.70	2	27	0.000	0.40
		Hotelling's Trace	6.08	23.70	2	27	0.000	0.40
		Roy's Largest Root	6.08	23.70	2	27	0.000	0.40
	Time*Group	Pillai's Trace	0.37	23.70	2	27	0.000	0.37
		Wilks' Lambda	0.35	22.88	2	27	0.000	0.37
		Hotelling's Trace	5.63	22.88	2	27	0.000	0.37
		Roy's Largest Root	5.63	22.88	2	27	0.000	0.37

The contents of Table 2 indicate that the significance level shows that responsibility training based on Choice Theory had a significant effect on the dependent variables of the study, namely academic performance ($F = 25.80$, $P <$

0.01) and academic motivation ($F = 23.70$, $P < 0.01$). The changes caused by this intervention across the three time points (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up) were significant.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Results Across Three Stages by Groups

Variable	Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance
Academic Performance	Pre-test vs. Follow-up	1.56	0.96	0.00
	Post-test vs. Follow-up	0.12	0.96	0.93
	Pre-test vs. Post-test	1.49	0.96	0.00
Academic Motivation	Pre-test vs. Follow-up	6.82	0.33	0.00
	Post-test vs. Follow-up	0.73	0.14	0.97
	Pre-test vs. Post-test	6.45	0.20	0.00

The results in [Table 3](#) show that the mean difference between the follow-up and post-test stages was not significant ($P > 0.05$), while the mean scores for both stages were significantly different from the pre-test stage in the experimental group ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect of responsibility training based on Choice Theory on the experimental group was sustained during the three-month follow-up period.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to determine the effectiveness of responsibility training based on Choice Theory on students' academic motivation and academic performance. The results obtained from the inferential statistical analysis using multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures showed that the responsibility training program based on Choice Theory had a significant impact on the academic performance and academic motivation of the students in the experimental group of this study, and this effect was sustained during the follow-up stage, as confirmed by the results of the Bonferroni post-hoc test. These results are consistent with findings from prior research ([Abdi Dehkordi et al., 2019](#); [Abdollahzadeh, 2020](#); [Asani, 2023](#); [Eslami Hasanabadi et al., 2023](#); [Ghoreishi & Behboodi, 2017](#); [Nikbakht et al., 2014](#); [Nowruzpoor et al., 2021](#); [Shafie et al., 2019](#); [Zarean et al., 2023](#)).

In explaining the results of this study, it can be said that the participants learned that their choices are their own. They also learned that responsibility includes considering others and not blaming them for personal problems. It seems that the participatory methods learned by the subjects, such as participation in household chores, schoolwork, employment, etc., led to a greater sense of responsibility and commitment in carrying out their tasks ([Shafie et al., 2019](#)). This appears to have led to improvements in academic motivation and academic performance in the experimental group members. To further explain the effectiveness of responsibility training

based on Choice Theory (Reality Therapy), it can be argued that responsibility training with preventive goals and the promotion of mental health levels prevents individuals from resorting to ineffective and aggressive behaviors under pressure and stress. This training helped students develop a sense of competence, the ability to overcome problems, increase self-esteem, learn effective planning, and engage in goal-directed behavior appropriate to the problem ([Eslami Hasanabadi et al., 2023](#); [Ghoreishi & Behboodi, 2017](#)), ultimately leading to improved academic performance and increased academic motivation in the experimental group students.

Furthermore, in explaining the findings of the study, it can be said that Reality Therapy is a method based on action, where efforts are made to satisfy the images in the quality world by meeting needs. The therapist, along with the client, will create an achievable and positively staged program that places the client in a position to satisfy their needs. This program is something that the client can implement. This type of therapy helps patients move from ineffective and destructive behaviors and choices towards more effective and constructive ones ([Zarean et al., 2023](#)). For this reason, it is expected that responsibility training based on Choice Theory or Reality Therapy would increase academic motivation and improve students' academic performance.

In further explaining the results of the present study, it can be stated that responsibility training based on Choice Theory is a highly effective method for preparing individuals to accept the myriad responsibilities they will encounter both inside and outside the home and provides them with the necessary tools for independence. This training ultimately fosters cognitive growth in students and strengthens their reasoning ([Eslami Hasanabadi et al., 2023](#)). Overall, it can be said that teaching the concepts and techniques of Reality Therapy in the responsibility training program based on Choice Theory can lead to logical thinking. By creating a logical perspective on life, it can help individuals cope with and solve problems. It also emphasizes that people always

behave in ways to control the world and themselves as part of the world to meet their basic needs, and the training teaches participants that people are responsible for their own lives, actions, feelings, and behaviors (Solouk, 2020). Moreover, it can be said that since the principles and techniques of Reality Therapy teach a cohesive concept of human behavior and invite individuals to embrace internal control psychology and abandon external control, based on experience, when we can transform our belief in external control and coercion into accurate awareness and understanding of choice, we are on the path to effective and long-term change. At this point, we are ready to stop focusing on the past and blaming the behavior and actions of others (over which we have no control) and focus on choosing more effective behaviors that we have sufficient control over in the here and now (Bhargava, 2013). Therefore, it seems logical that the principles and techniques used in the Choice Theory-based training program have led to increased academic motivation and improved academic performance in the students in the experimental group of this study.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Like any other research, this study also has limitations and is no exception to this rule. One of the major limitations of this study was the use of a self-report questionnaire to measure the academic motivation variable. Such tools are inherently imprecise, and the fact that the study population consisted of elementary school students suggests that the accuracy of this tool may be even lower, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. The use of a quasi-experimental research design can also impact the accuracy of the results obtained, as many variables are beyond the researcher's control. Finally, the use of a convenience sampling method may raise concerns about the generalizability of the findings, all of which suggest that generalizing the results of this study should be done with great care and caution.

In conclusion, to confirm or refute the findings of this study, future researchers should examine responsibility training based on Choice Theory in different statistical populations and with consideration of various dependent variables. Finally, based on the results of the present study, it is suggested that the techniques used in responsibility training based on Reality Therapy be employed by child and adolescent counselors and therapists. It is also recommended that teachers and school counselors use this approach in their work, and that training sessions and workshops be organized

for both specialists and educators, as well as for those involved in the education sector.

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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 equally contributed to this article.

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