

A Comparative Study on Effects of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Self-Perception Training on Autonomous Academic Motivation

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of emotion-focused therapy (EFT) and self-perception training (SPT) on autonomous academic motivation (AAM). The extant study was applied research in terms of objective. This also was an experimental research with a pretest-posttest plan and control group (multiple groups). The sampling process was conducted based on a cluster multistage method in which one education district (among two studied districts) was selected randomly. There were four schools among the girls' high schools situated in the selected district. Two classes were chosen from each selected school and 30 subjects were randomly chosen from each class. The total population equaled 240 (N=240). The studied sample comprised 75 subjects (n=75); of which, 25 subjects were assigned to two therapy groups (self-perception training and EFT), as well as one control group. The autonomous Motivation Scale (AMS) designed by Vallerand, Blais, Brière, and Senécal (1992) was employed to assess the autonomous motivation of students. Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was used to examine the effectiveness of considered interventions. Moreover, the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to follow statistical presumptions of MANCOVA, and Levin, Box tests were used to testing normality presumption. Tukey test was also employed to compare effectiveness levels of studied interventions in this research. The obtained results indicated higher effectiveness of self-perception training (rather than EFT) on the autonomous academic motivation of female high-school students in Ardabil, Iran.

Keywords: Autonomous Academic Motivation, Emotion-Focused Therapy, Self-Perception Training

1. Introduction

Academic motivation is defined as an academic engagement or cognitive, emotional, behavioral investment in education progress based on the experimental objectives (Hafezi, 2002). Introducing self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci examined the nature of academic motivation and contextual factors affecting this variable. Self-determinant motivation theory is indeed a new motivation theory, which became the origin for many types of research to introduce underlying principles of human sustainable motivation (Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2008). According to this theory, the motivation construct is divided into three components of intrinsic motive, extrinsic motive, and amotivation. The domain of this construct ranges from autonomy to amotivation that indicates inability and helplessness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Guay, Ratelle, and Chanal (2008). Relative autonomous motivation and the need for autonomy are concepts of this theory indicating an individual's ability to make decisions independently. Those people who have high-level motivation do not require external controls. Guay, Ratell, Roy, and Litalien (2010) found a significant relationship between academic self-concept and autonomous academic motivation. Santrock (2016) assumes that achievement motivation encourages individuals to do difficult tasks, and refers to academic achievement. Stone et al. (2008) explained that self-determination theory was linked to many academic fields such as education and training. Many

authors, Guay, Ratell, Roy, and Litalien (2010), Ayub (2010), and Guay, Ratelle, and Chanal (2008) have studied the relationship between autonomous motivation and academic achievement.

Various interventions have been designed for academic motivation. Emotion-focused therapy is one of the interventions working on academic motivation. EFT helps patients to achieve change and recovery by increasing their emotional knowledge working on emotions without dealing with them (Greenberg, 2002). EFT expresses that emotions have an innately adaptive potential that, if activated and worked through, can help people change problematic emotional states. EFT helps clients to identify, discover, change, and manage their emotions in a better way.

EFT forms the mental structure and serves as a key determinant for self-organization (Greenberg, 2006). This therapy effectively regulates emotions by focusing on them (Soltani, Shaeeri, Roshan, and Rahimi, 2014). In EFT, awareness of emotion is considered as the intervention criterion that reduces pathological symptoms. According to findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Elliott et al. (2008), EFT was used in 18 pieces of research with diverse clinical populations and covered 344 clients (Elliott, Watson, Greenberg, Timulak, and Freire, 2013).

Self-perception training is another method, which improves academic motivation. Damon and Hart (1991) define self-understanding as an intrinsic-extrinsic interaction through internalization and externalization. Self-perception is the holistic understanding of self, which is formed and changed based on the person's experience and others' interpretation of that experience. Harter (1985) believes that individuals have a general judgment about their value since 8 years old indicating how they evaluate and value themselves. In case of low self-perception, the person faces anxiety while evaluating her/him (Stipek, 2006).

Students' self-perception is formed in the educational situation by the social comparison process. Students in fact compare themselves with those students who have higher ability, so achieve lower self-perception and academic self-concept (Marsh, 1987). According to Chevalier (2009), individuals with positive self-concept achieve higher education levels. Therefore, this study aimed at comparing the effects of EFT and self-perception in autonomous academic motivation.

Literature Review

EFT

Psychotherapies usually provide useful solutions to express the most suitable and normal emotions. However, EFT directly works on emotions to overcome emotional problems. EFT helps patients to achieve change and recovery by increasing their emotional knowledge working on emotions without dealing with them (Greenberg, 2002). EFT is an experiential therapy (Elliott, Greenberg, and Lietaer, 2004) in which components of "client-centered therapy" (Rogers) and "Gestalt exercises" (Perls) have been incorporated into "emotion therapy" and "Transcendental Dialectic Constructive Therapy." EFT was first used to name a couple-therapy approach (Greenberg and Johnson, 1988).

Several studies have proved the effectiveness of EFT in reducing anxiety disorders such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and social phobia (Elliot, 2012). Many research results have indicated that although EFT has been used to treat some disorders (Carrier & Greenburg, 2012). Nevertheless, reports indicate that EFT is not employed to treat patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), while many psychology and psychiatry texts on OCD have focused on emotion to achieve more beneficial therapy. Greenberg (2010) found that EFT could reduce distraction while creating positive emotions in students with a learning disability.

SPT

Susan Harter defines the nature of the "self" concept (Harter, 1983) as follows:

A) A change in the concept of "self" is about change in those traits and characteristics to which people refer to describe themselves. Within the change process, children first describe themselves based on their physical characteristics, such as height, sex, appearance, various properties, etc. In the next step, activities, actions, skills are more considered, and then a description of self will be done based on the psychological dimensions, including emotions (affections and moods), motives (objectives, goals, and documents), and well as cognitive cases (thinking method, mental procedures).

B) A change in the structure of "self" or structural changes: Change in the concept of "self" occurs in line with the change in its structure. The latter change is directly related to cognitive developments. During adolescence, self is described as an abstract concept. It means that characteristics and traits are integrated into a more generalized organization leading to an abstract concept of self.

C) A change in regulations used to evaluate "self": during childhood, children consider themselves eligible and capable of doing many actions. For instance, they see themselves as the best runner or athlete. According to Harter, such exaggerations stem from children's disability to distinguish between realities and dreams. Accurate evaluation of "self" is affected by another cognitive limit, which is the inability for "perspective-taking" and it is during middle childhood when a child can evaluate "self" based on social comparisons. This requires the child's ability to compare concepts. During the objective-subjective operations, the child achieves the ability to compare two concepts simultaneously (Mohseni, 1996).

Soleimankhan, Poshneh, and Alizadeh (2011) carried out a study to examine the relationship between self-perception, achievement motivation, and academic achievement of male and female elementary students with and without ADHD. They found that elementary male students with hyperactivity had higher self-perception rather than girls with hyperactivity, as well as normal students. Moreover, male students showed higher extrinsic achievement motivation compared to girls with hyperactivity. Abolghasemi and Narimani (2012) carried out a study to compare self-perception and safety measures in students with social anxiety disorder symptoms and normal students and showed that self-perception in students with social anxiety disorder compared to the control group was more impaired; hence, this variable could predict social anxiety disorder in students.

Autonomous Motivation

In terms of training, motivation is either objective or measure. When considering motivation as objective, it is expected that students become interested in different scientific and social subjects. In other words, they must be motivated. Therefore, all courses should pursue motivational goals. As a measure, motivation is taken into account as a psychological readiness for learning, which affects learning. There are various motivational approaches to motivation of which, cognitive approach introduces thoughts of a person as the origin for motivation. According to the cognitive approach, behaviors are created by objectives, expectations, and attributions of a person, as well as any factor leading to a vital imbalance of individual. Achievement motivation is one of these approaches (Raeesi, 2001; Seyf, 2007).

Motivation affects all activities done by students. Motivated students are interested in activities, are studious, have high self-confidence, do their tasks, and perform perfectly. On contrary, teachers of students with poor performance may introduce them as amotivated in learning. They can get better if attempt more and more. Assuming that achievement motivation is a valuable objective affecting all educational dimensions, teachers and education practitioners must choose it as the main objective (Pintrch & Schunk, 2002; translated by Shahr Aray, 2007). Academic motivation affects the learning process of learners. Academic motivation is a learning requirement, which directs the behavior of the learner. Motivation is indeed what motivates learners and leads their activities (Talebzadegan, 1999).

Bandura, a social cognitive theorist, assumes that self-efficacy or a person's beliefs in his/her abilities are the most substantial motivational factors affecting human performance. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as a person's beliefs and judgment about their competence to do a specific task. Pajares and Miller (1994) define self-efficacy as a specific and context-related evaluation of a person's capability to do a specific task. The higher the self-efficacy, the more the attempt, resistance, and resilience will be. Self-efficacy affects the stress and anxiety level individuals experiencing while doing an action (Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

According to the social-cognitive theory of Bandura, individuals tend to do those works that are competent and good at them avoiding those tasks in which they are incompetent. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how much time people spend on an activity, how much they resist obstacles, and how much are resilient in conflicting situations (Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

Perceived self-efficacy plays a vital role in self-motivation because self-efficacy belief affects choosing challenging goals, attempts in doing tasks, resilience, and efforts while facing problems, and tolerance level (Bandura, 2000). Bandura (1997) explains that many activities bring many desirable outcomes if are done well, while these activities are not pursued by those who do not trust in their competency. On contrary, people with high efficacy expect to achieve success without giving up despite the adverse implications. Therefore, self-efficacy explains that a person's belief in their abilities forms the behaviors required for achieving positive results. This belief also motivates the person to do more endeavors to employ their behaviors.

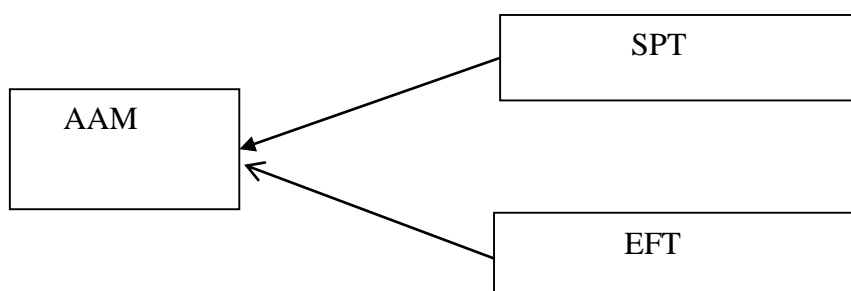


Figure 1. A theoretical model based on the Self-Perception Model of Tanon End (2002), EFT (Greenberg, 2010), AAM model of Gauy et al. (2010)

2. Method

The extant study was applied research in terms of objective. This was an experimental study with a pretest-posttest plan and a control group (multiple groups). The statistical population comprised second-grade high school students in Ardabil, Iran. The sampling process was conducted based on a cluster multistage method in which one education district (among two studied districts) was selected randomly. There were four schools among the girls' high schools situated in the selected district. Two classes were chosen from each selected school and 30 subjects were randomly chosen from each class. The total population equaled 240 (N=240). All of the selected students were assessed using the AMS scale. Finally, 75 students who obtained the highest AAM scores were assigned to three groups. It worth noting that the statistical sample size equals 15 subjects in each group in experimental studies (Delavar, 2003), while it equaled 25 subjects in the present study to increase the external validity of the study and probable

loss of respondents. Accordingly, the studied sample included 75 subjects of which 25 students were assigned to every three groups, including SPT, EFT, and control groups.

AMS designed by Pelletier, Blais, Briere, and Senecal (1992) was used to evaluate the autonomous motivation of students. This scale includes 28 items; each item is scored based on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly true) to 7 (strongly false). This scale is composed of seven sub-scales, which consist of four items. Three subscales assess three types of intrinsic motivation (intrinsic motivation to accomplish things, to know, and to experience stimulation), and the other three subscales assess three types of extrinsic motivation (external, introjected, and identified regulation). The last scale measures amotivation. Cronbach's alpha of AMS's subscales equaled 0.72-0.91 by Gauy et al. (2010) and reported to 0.77-0.96 by Chen and Jang (2010).

Table 1. EFT steps

Steps	Content of sessions
1	Making a relationship with and commitment on therapy: explaining the nature of anxiety, as well as its factors and signs, the conceptualization of EFT, observing and evaluating subjects based on their abilities to focus on inner experiences.
2	Identifying defective interaction cycle, and finding underlying emotions that form interactive situations: identifying conflicting and critical feelings about self, and important individuals in life.
3	Changing those issues that create emotional needs and desirable emotional cycle: providing conditions for unpleasant experiences in communicational and familial contexts, and challenging these circumstances.
4	Using relaxation technique: to smooth self-blame feelings and words to reduce frustration experience of subjects.
5	Identifying and controlling needs, desires, and underlying factors of emotions: in this way, subjects forget the sense of insufficiency and feeling imperfect by searching two different aspects of their experiences.
6	Facilitating expression and feelings, needs, and desires: through description and negotiation on voice mode, the severity of discomfort, anger, and pain.
7	Creating new solutions for previous problems: teaching the process of transferring a sense of disappointment, anger, and shame of subjects enabling them to cope with problems, changes in significant life aspects
8	Forming a new behavior cycle: proposing some samples of the quality of interpersonal relations in the life of individuals to stabilize new learning skills.

Table 2. Harter's Self-Perception Profile (1985)

Session 1	Familiarity with self-perception training and justification.
Session 2	Evaluation of self-perception, describing and determining factors related to its signs, the conceptualization of SPT, and expressing training goals.
Sessions 3 & 4	Appearance: appearance, emotional reactions, and body-related situations are formed based on the present and past body perceptions. If a person does not have a positive image of their bodies considering their appearance against the ideal

	standards of society, they will face some unpleasant feelings and attitudes toward self, such as low self-esteem and self-confidence, depression, or academic failure. Positive body image can affect the academic achievement of individuals.
Session 5	Behavioral conduct: behavioral conduct includes behavior effectiveness skills, making a decision for self, distinguishing between feelings and thoughts, self-assessment process, and logical behavior. Avoiding emotional reactions.
Session 6	Academic competence: this competence includes a comparison between students, recognizing academic talent, and teaching academic achievement process
Sessions 7 & 8	Social acceptance: social acceptance is about the ability to care for self and others. Social competence includes four components: A) cognitive skills, including knowledge treasury, information processing and acquiring skills, and the ability for decision-making. B) Behavioral skills, including negotiation, role- or perspective-taking, assertiveness, conversational skills, and prosocial skills. C) Emotional skills to make an effective relationship with others, forming and expanding trust and mutually supportive relations, identifying and responding to emotional signs in social interactions, and stress management. D) Motivational skills, including individual's value structure, moral development, and sense of efficacy and control, as well as self-efficacy.
Session 9	Self-worth, which includes self-esteem, social skills, self-management, and self-awareness
Session 10	Stabilizing and improving teachings

MANCOVA was used to assess the effectiveness of considered interventions. Moreover, the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to follow statistical presumptions of MANCOVA, and Levin, Box tests were used to testing normality presumption. Tukey test was also employed to compare effectiveness levels of studied interventions in this research.

3. Findings

This study was conducted to compare the effects of EFT and SPT on AAM. The obtained results have been proposed herein.

Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the effects of SPT and EFT on AAM among female high school students in Ardabil, Iran.

ANCOVA was used to test hypotheses. This test can be implemented based on some presumptions reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Presumptions of ANCOVA

	Shapiro–Wilk test	
1. Normal distribution of data	P=0.792 Z=0.987	
2. Variance homogeneity	Levin	Box
	P=0.73 F=1.69	P=0.08 F=1.82

3- Regression slope homogeneity	Sig of group*motivation	Sig of group*pretest
	P=0.74 F=2.37	P=0.54 P=1.84
4. Distance dependent variable: AAM was measured at the distance level.		

According to Table 3, a significance level of data normality was greater than 0.05, indicating the normal distribution of variables. In the second row of the table, $P > 0.05$ indicated that H_1 was rejected, while H_0 was confirmed. Accordingly, variances were homogenous so the presumption existed. Hence, Univariate ANCOVA was used. The third row indicated homogeneity of regression slope so that significance levels (interaction between the independent variable (group) with two mediator variables (academic motivation and pretest)) were greater than 0.50 and indicated an insignificant relationship. Therefore, regression slope homogeneity allowed performing ANCOVA.

Table 4. MANCOVA of posttest' mean scores of academic motivation among subjects in two experimental groups and pretest control

Test	Value	F	df (hypothesis)	df (error)	Sig.
Pillai's trace	0.768	1724.389	2	48	0.000
Wilks' Lambda	0.002	1724.389	2	48	0.000
Hotelling's trace	157.364	1724.389	2	48	0.000
Roy's largest root	157.364	1724.389	2	48	0.000

According to values reported in Table 4, there was a significant difference between the two experimental groups in terms of academic motivation after pretest control ($P < 0.01$, $F = 1724.389$, $\text{Lambda} = 0.002$). Therefore, the hypothesis of the study was confirmed. Univariate ANCOVA was used in the context of MANCOVA to find the effectiveness level of studied methods.

Table 5. Results of univariate ANCOVA on posttest mean scores of academic motivation among subjects in two experimental groups with pretest control

Variables	Sum squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
First Experimental group1 (motivation)	8.5412	2	4.2706	2.784	0.000
Second Experimental group (motivation)	12.625	2	6.3125	7.394	0.001

According to values reported in Table 5, there was a significant difference between motivation levels of the first experimental group ($F=4.270$, $P<0.05$) and the second experimental group ($F=7.394$, $P<0.05$). The obtained mean values indicated higher posttest' average academic motivation of the first experimental group that received self-perception training compared to the second group that received EFT. Therefore, there was a significant difference between the effects of SPT and EFT on the academic motivation of female high school students in Ardabil. Table 6 reports the results of the Bonferroni post hoc test to indicate the difference between the effects of studied interventions on the academic motivation of subjects.

Table 6. Results of Bonferroni post hoc test on two experimental groups

Dependent variable	Comparison between groups	Mean difference	SD	Sig.	Confidence distance of 95%	
Academic motivation	Experimental group 1 - experimental group 2	6.98	0.67	0.000	Lower bound	Higher bound
					5.78	7.43

According to results reported in Table 6, the difference between mean scores of academic motivation in two experimental groups equaled 6.98 that was significant statistically ($P<0.05$). Therefore, self-perception training had a higher effect (rather than EFT) on the autonomous academic motivation of female high school students in Ardabil, Iran.

4. Conclusion

This study was conducted to compare the effects of EFT and SPT on AAM. This was applied research in terms of objective, and an experimental study with pretest-posttest plan and control group (multiple groups). The cluster multistage sampling method was used in this research. The obtained results indicated the higher effect of SPT compared to EFT on the autonomous academic motivation of female high school students in Ardabil, Iran. Moreover, emotion-focused therapy had a significant impact on the AAM of female high school students in Ardabil. This result was consistent with findings obtained by Gholami and Fani (2017) and Greenberg (2010). It can be explained that focused therapy means creating a new meaning in life. Evidence indicates that these individuals can experience significant arousal and deep emotion associated with autonomous motivation through EFT. In this way, individuals will experience inner arousal. According to Pass et al. (2007), EFT helps persons to achieve self-arousal and autonomous motivation. The obtained results indicated a significant impact of self-perception in motivation by teaching self-perception techniques. This finding was in line with results obtained by Soleymankhani et al. (2011), Khadivi and Mafakheri (2011). It worth noting that self-distinguished individuals had pleasant expectations; they try to achieve their demands and desires motivationally. On the contrary, those who do not have self-worth feel incompetent and invaluable. Such feelings affect the other characteristics of persons, such as self-concept and competencies. These individuals suffer from negative self-perception and lose their achievement motivation. Wiley (2017) believes that self-perception is the most determinant of behavior. Individuals who have positive perception live a successful life, while negative perception causes humiliation, helplessness, distress, and aimlessness.

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