

The Effect of Responsibility Training Based on Reality Therapy Approach on the Academic and Social Self-efficacy of Female Vocational High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Adolescence is a critical developmental stage in which self-efficacy plays a pivotal role. The aim of the present study was to determine the effect of responsibility training based on the Reality Therapy approach on the self-efficacy of female vocational high school students.

Method: The research employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test involving an experimental group and a control group. The statistical population consisted of all female vocational high school students in Arak during the 2024 academic year. Using purposive sampling, the researchers conducted an initial screening by administering the Adolescent Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (Muris, 2001) to 150 students. Thirty students with the lowest scores were selected and randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=15) and the control group (n=15). The experimental group received eight 90-minute sessions of responsibility training based on Reality Therapy (Garavandnia et al., 2024), while the control group received no intervention. Data were collected using the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ-C) developed by Muris (2001) and analyzed using the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Results: The results indicated a significant difference in the mean scores of overall, social, academic, and emotional self-efficacy in the experimental group compared to the control group ($P < .05$).

Conclusions: The findings suggest that responsibility training based on Reality Therapy significantly enhances self-efficacy components among female adolescents. This intervention can be utilized as an effective method to improve students' psychological capabilities and social adjustment.

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Introduction

Adolescents face numerous transitional events due to the specific characteristics of the developmental stage in which they live, including biological, emotional, and behavioral changes. Navigating these changes poses difficulties for most of them (Ahadi & Jomehri, 2024). The critical conditions of adolescence can create problems in various areas, including social adjustment and academic affairs. In this regard, in our current society, adolescents who are unable to perform their academic tasks optimally face several challenges. These include academic failure, dropping out, and negative evaluations from counselors, teachers, and parents. Such negative perceptions often place vocational school students in a vicious cycle, portraying them as weak. The result of this evaluation is a significant decline in their academic performance and social adjustment, which ultimately leads to a decrease in their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is one of the prominent aspects of Bandura's social-cognitive theory. This trait extends across many of an individual's personal and social behaviors (Bandura, 2010). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to confront life's problems, which does not merely refer to a specific situation or behavior (Hsu et al., 2017). In fact, it can be stated that self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their competencies, capabilities, and sense of adequacy in facing difficulties (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020; Gartika et al., 2021; van Munster et al., 2022). Self-efficacy beliefs, which are influenced by factors such as family, peers, school, and gender differences, begin in childhood and continue throughout life, affecting various domains such as education, occupation, and family relationships (Flowers, 2012). Low levels of self-efficacy drive individuals toward avoidant behaviors and social isolation, which entails being deprived of many positive social reinforcers (Bandura, 2010). Conversely, increasing self-efficacy can be effective in individuals' adjustment and strengthen their ability to face upcoming issues and find effective solutions in life (Satici et al., 2013).

The behaviors individuals exhibit when facing unknown successes, as well as their level of resistance and resilience in confronting life's difficulties and problems, are influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs (Jaekel et al., 2012). Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to continue their efforts until achieving success even in the face of failure, whereas those with low self-efficacy tend to give up and accept failure under such conditions (Ford & Dekson, 2012). Research has shown a positive correlation between general self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy. The question is whether self-efficacy can be modified under the influence of certain variables, and in this context, utilizing the Reality Therapy approach is considered.

Reality Therapy is among the most recent efforts by psychotherapists to investigate and describe human nature and determine the factors affecting their behavior and how to achieve satisfaction, happiness, and success (Glasser, 2000). This approach is a therapeutic intervention

method designed to help individuals regain effective control over their lives (Wubbolding, 2018). The primary goal of this approach is to help individuals become aware of their needs, monitor their behavior, and make appropriate choices (Yadollahi et al., 2019). In Reality Therapy, the aim is for the individual to identify their short-term and long-term life goals, define them with clarity and precision, explore possible ways to achieve these goals, and make a decision that increases the likelihood of reaching desired results and creating a more positive feeling (Sharf, 2015). Glasser believes that humans are free to choose their life path. If individuals rely on their own decisions when choosing goals and methods to achieve them, they will pursue those goals with a greater sense of responsibility and subsequently experience a more satisfying and successful life (Holland & Walker, 2015). The core elements of responsibility include self-awareness, acceptance of behavioral consequences, self-evaluation, and self-control (Serrat, 2017; as cited in Razm et al., 2021). Amiri Khorasani and Lavasani (2014) showed in their research that responsibility is significantly higher among committed high school students compared to uncommitted students (Taher Soltani et al., 2020).

Research has demonstrated the impact of Reality Therapy on increasing self-efficacy (Akhshijan et al., 2024; Hadian et al., 2023; Komsari et al., 2021; Razavi, 2023), increasing psychological well-being (Arefi & Ganjavi, 2017), increasing happiness and responsibility (Khazan et al., 2015), responsibility and school engagement (Arab Kalhori et al., 2020), responsibility and resilience (Khayat Ghiasi et al., 2024; Saadati Shamir et al., 2018; Soltani et al., 2020), life satisfaction (Behboud Takieh & Nazari, 2024), responsibility and happiness (Ghazi Qazvini & Amiri Fard, 2024), and academic vitality and student flourishing (Gharizadeh & Fathi Azar, 2024). Therefore, given the aforementioned points, this study sought to investigate whether responsibility training based on Choice Theory affects the self-efficacy of female vocational school students.

Materials and Methods

Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test and a control group.

Participants

The statistical population comprised female vocational high school students in Arak during the 2024 academic year. Using purposive sampling, an initial screening was conducted by the researchers via administering the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire to 150 students. Students who scored below the mean score in the initial screening were selected. Thirty students who scored the lowest were selected and randomly assigned to either the experimental group (n=15) or the control group

(n=15). Inclusion criteria were the absence of acute physical or psychological disorders and consent to participate. Exclusion criteria included absence from more than two intervention sessions.

Instruments

Adolescent Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ-C): The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Muris (2001) was used to measure the dependent variable. The scale consists of 23 items across three subscales: **Social Self-Efficacy (8 items):** Measuring the ability to communicate with peers and assertiveness; **Academic Self-Efficacy (8 items):** Assessing perceived capability in managing learning behaviors and mastering subjects; and **Emotional Self-Efficacy (7 items):** Evaluating the ability to cope with negative emotions. The questionnaire is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very much). The tool was standardized in Iran by Tahmassian (2007). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were .78 for the total scale, .75 for social self-efficacy, .81 for academic self-efficacy, and .85 for emotional self-efficacy.

Procedure

The experimental group participated in eight 90-minute sessions of responsibility training based on Reality Therapy (Garavandnia et al., 2024), while the control group received no training. A summary of the sessions is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of responsibility training sessions based on reality therapy

Session	Content	Assignment
1	Introduction of members, stating group goals, preliminary explanation of Choice Theory.	Members were asked to state what they want and identify their main complaint.
2	Explaining the "Why" and "How" of behavior; discussion on Basic Needs and Quality World; examining members' self-attitudes.	Noting basic needs in different areas and describing their Quality World.
3	Explaining destructive behaviors vs. desirable behaviors; providing responsibility exercises.	Noting instances of fulfilling or neglecting responsibilities and expressing associated feelings.
4	Explaining cognitive regulation of emotion via Choice Theory; introducing the Four Conflicts (e.g., wanting to force others).	Bridging the gap between the Quality World and the Real World. Providing real-life examples of conflicts.
5	Introducing the Seven Deadly Habits (criticizing, blaming, etc.) and Seven Caring Habits (listening, supporting, etc.).	Practicing the replacement of deadly habits with caring habits as a weekly assignment to improve choices.
6	Introduction to Internal vs. External Control psychology; teaching the ten axioms of Choice Theory to improve relationships.	Requesting personal examples regarding control.

Session	Content	Assignment
7	Formulating a practical plan to avoid External Control; developing a plan to change thoughts/actions regarding problems.	Summarization. Choosing a goal, committing to it, and accepting responsibility.
8	Conclusion and review. Discussing physiology and feelings.	Performing effective actions to interpret physiology and feelings correctly.

Results

The descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 2. As shown, the mean scores for the control group remained relatively stable, whereas the experimental group showed a significant increase in all dimensions of self-efficacy at the post-test stage.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of self-efficacy variables (pre-test and post-test)

Group	Variables	Pre-test (Mean $\pm$ SD)	Post-test (Mean $\pm$ SD)
Control	Social Self-Efficacy	25.1 $\pm$ 4.46	25.7 $\pm$ 4.32
	Academic Self-Efficacy	27.3 $\pm$ 3.72	26.11 $\pm$ 3.97
	Emotional Self-Efficacy	19.6 $\pm$ 3.65	18.7 $\pm$ 3.26
	Total Self-Efficacy	68 $\pm$ 6.72	71.4 $\pm$ 5.84
Experimental	Social Self-Efficacy	3.27 $\pm$ 45.4	6.35 $\pm$ 76.4
	Academic Self-Efficacy	26.25 $\pm$ 76.3	7.33 $\pm$ 65.3
	Emotional Self-Efficacy	42.19 $\pm$ 94.3	3.23 $\pm$ 62.3
	Total Self-Efficacy	98.71 $\pm$ 11.6	6.91 $\pm$ 71.4

Before analyzing the data, the assumptions of ANCOVA were examined. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed the normal distribution of data in the pre-test and post-test stages ($P > .05$). Also, Levene's test confirmed the equality of variances across groups ($P > .05$).

Table 3. Results of ANCOVA for total self-efficacy and separate ANCOVAs for subscales

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Self-Efficacy	Covariate	69.72	1	69.72	6.92	.02
	Group Effect	109.17	1	109.17	10.83	.008
	Error	272.15	27	10.079		
Academic Self-Efficacy	Covariate	27.63	1	27.63	2.45	.013
	Group Effect	147.92	1	147.92	13.14	.003
	Error	303.75	27	11.25		
Emotional Self-Efficacy	Covariate	35.98	1	35.89	2.38	.12
	Group Effect	102.74	1	102.74	6.81	.019
	Error	407	27	15.07		

The results of Table 3 indicate that after adjusting for pretest scores, the main effect of responsibility education was significantly effective on the scores of the social self-efficacy subscale ($F = 10.83$, $P = .008$), academic self-efficacy subscale ($F = 13.14$, $P = .003$), and emotional self-

efficacy subscale ($F = 6.81$, $P = .019$) in the experimental group, leading to their improvement. These findings emphasize that the reality therapy intervention effectively enhanced all dimensions of self-efficacy in the participants of the experimental group.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of responsibility training based on the reality therapy approach on the self-efficacy of female vocational school students. The results showed that this intervention caused a significant increase in the mean scores of emotional, social, and academic self-efficacy subscales in the experimental group compared to the control group in the post-test. The findings of this study regarding the improvement of emotional and social self-efficacy are consistent with the results of previous studies, including Akhshijan et al. (2024), Hadian et al. (2023), Razavi (2023), Kamsari et al. (2021), Soltani et al. (2020), Zanyal et al. (2021), and Asli Azad et al. (2021), which demonstrated the effectiveness of reality therapy in improving psychological well-being and social self-efficacy.

To explain these findings based on Glasser's theory (1998, 2012), it can be argued that responsibility training facilitates the transition from external control psychology to internal control psychology. Adolescence is often characterized by feelings of confusion and a lack of control over environmental stressors. Through this training, participants learned that they are not victims of external circumstances, but rather responsible for their own choices. Glasser believes that all human behaviors are an attempt to satisfy five basic needs (survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun). By analyzing their behavior using the WDEP system (Wants, Doing, Evaluation, Planning), individuals in the experimental group learned whether their current behaviors helped satisfy these needs and achieve their "quality world."

According to Reality Therapy theory, emotional and social self-efficacy increase when individuals understand their role in the life process and believe that personal and internal factors play a more effective role than external conditions in their path to success and failure. This can lead to crucial and effective cognitive changes in life; and accordingly, they realize that their happiness is not affected by negative and unwanted events that have occurred in their lives, but rather they can build the future as they desire through their own will and decisions. Consequently, they develop a positive attitude towards life and acquire the necessary readiness to face life's challenges.

This intervention helped students understand that although they cannot directly control their feelings or physiology, they have direct control over their thoughts and actions (components of 'total behavior'). By choosing more effective actions, such as assertive communication, and replacing destructive habits like criticizing and blaming with caring habits like listening and supporting, they experienced more positive outcomes in their social interactions. The group

environment also played a decisive role by providing a supportive atmosphere where individuals could express their feelings, realize they are not alone in their problems, and strengthen their social and emotional self-efficacy by practicing new social behaviors.

moreover, our findings indicated the effectiveness of responsibility training in improving students' academic self-efficacy, which was consistent with those of Ghazi Ghazvini and Amiri Fard (2024), Khayat Ghiasi et al. (2023), Hatamian et al. (2021), Arab Kalhori et al. (2020), and Abdollahzadeh (2020). This result shows that teaching the principles of choice theory and responsibility increased students' belief in their own capabilities regarding academic activities. In explaining this finding, it can be claimed that responsibility training based on reality therapy fostered a positive self-perception in students regarding their ability to complete tasks—by emphasizing planning for assignments, focusing on the present, not dwelling on past failures and frustrations, and helping the individual accept a sense of control over life conditions and take more effective actions (such as studying regularly and purposefully instead of procrastinating), thereby increasing their academic self-efficacy.

Conclusion

The present study confirms that responsibility training based on Reality Therapy is an effective intervention for enhancing self-efficacy among female vocational high school students. By internalizing the concept of Total Behavior and learning to make responsible choices to satisfy their basic needs, adolescents can gain a sense of agency over their lives. This transition from external to internal control empowers them to manage academic challenges and social relationships more effectively. Given the critical role of self-efficacy in adolescent development, it is recommended that school counselors and educational psychologists integrate Reality Therapy and responsibility training into their curriculum to improve students' psychological resilience and social adjustment. Future research could investigate the long-term sustainability of these effects and compare this approach with other cognitive-behavioral interventions.

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Ethical considerations

The authors avoided from data fabrication and falsification.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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