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### Review the Effectiveness of Encouragement Education on Enhancing the High School Student's Academic Self-Efficacy

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#### A B S T R A C T

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This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of encouragement education on reducing exam stress and increasing self-efficacy of ninth grade female high school students by pretest - posttest experimental method with control group. Sample group consisted of 20 female students of the high schools of Bandar Lengeh in 2015-16 academic years and were chosen by cluster random sampling method and were placed randomly into two groups of test and control (10 people in each group). The scale of exam stress and perfectionism of participants in this research was evaluated by Ahwaz exam anxiety form (1996) and Lowenthal academic self-efficacy scale (1996) in the pre-test and post-test respectively and the test group participated in 10 sessions of encouragement education. The covariance analysis running on data showed that the amount of exam anxiety and self-efficacy of experimental group has a significant decrease and increase ( $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that encouragement education can cause a significant reduce in exam anxiety and significant increase in self-efficacy in the scores of ninth grade female high school students.

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**Keywords:** Encouragement, Self- Efficacy, Talent, Context, Effort.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Every year the number of dropout students who are forced to drop out the school increases despite the good ability and talent to continue their education<sup>1</sup>. Some effective factors are involved in this matter some of which are anxiety and lack of self-control. Various studies have shown that 10 to 30 percent of school and university students are involved with anxiety. Hooman in his study in 1994 stated that Iranian students have higher exam stress scores' average than American students. On the other hand, according to researches of Abolqasemi, 20% to 30% of academic failure cases are related to exam stress<sup>2</sup>.

However, researches have shown that one of the reasons of exam stress is the perfectionist tendencies of students and their families. Nowadays, the families try

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to prepare their children to be the best of their peers since the childhood. This method of education causes the children to know themselves as valuable only when they are proved by their parents. Since the confirmation of parents and others has a basic role in personality structure of people, they try to double their efforts to give their expectations a positive respond. This trend will become a sustainable treatment over the time, and parental expectations will be replaced by ambitious and unattainable expectations. Their thirst for perfectionism is not limited to one or more special things. But they want to have perfect and impeccable thoughts, feelings, behavior and beliefs in all aspects of life. Academic period, from the primary to higher levels of education, is one of these aspects of life<sup>3</sup>.

As it was mentioned, one of the most important sources of creating stress in adolescents is the fear of being evaluated, judged and ultimately get blamed and reprimanded by adults. However, the Adler extremists such as Dreikurs Ferguson<sup>4</sup> believe that the most critical thing for bringing up the healthy people is encouragement, while the parents and teachers are unaware of this fact. In other words, encouragement is the basis of any relationship and cooperation, both at home and school.

Previously, some different treatment method was being used for reducing the stress and increasing the self-efficacy, but the encouragement method has not been used. Many of the people face or are involved with people who are discouraging or merely procryptic and it happen rarely to face encouraging people in their life. The surrounding people usually wait until he succeeds and then encourage him. It usually less happens for the person to be encouraged or get any hope during the effort. Besides that, the person tries to receive the confirmation and admiration by perfection and these perfectionism tendencies bring up the stress background for person.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was used with control group. There are two groups in this research. Both groups were measured at the same time before running the independent variable. Both groups were measured again at the same time after running the independent variable. The subjects were chosen randomly and placed into groups. The test group was exposed to the independent variable but this was not implemented for the control group.

The research population was all the new system high school students who enrolled at one of the schools in the Bandar Lengeh (in Iran) in the first semester of 2015-16 academic years. The sampling method in this study is cluster random sampling. At first, one school was chosen randomly among all the female high schools of Bandar Lengeh, and then the ninth grade school students were selected. In the next step, the academic self-efficacy test was implemented on the ninth grade high school students. After implementing the test, 20 school students who had lower self-efficacy were selected and placed randomly into two groups of test

and control (The number of sample group should be at least 4 people and at most 10 people in the view of Schunaker as the designer of educational plan of this research). After implementing pre-tests, the school students were placed into two groups of test and control that had lowest level of self-efficacy randomly. The control group was not under any education but the test group was taught the encouragement education of schunaker. This educational course includes ten 1.5 hours sessions with a six-stage structure:

1. Relaxation
2. Feedback of previous session's assignments
3. Presenting information
4. The practice training related to information of that meeting
5. Expressing the assignment of next session
6. Relaxation

The objectives of these 10 sessions are:

First session: Introducing the concept of encouragement and teaching behaviors and attributes that are encouraging.

Second session: Goal orientation training of human behavior.

Third session: Educating to give encouragement to others who are more capable of self and accepting mistakes, and dare to be incomplete.

Fourth session: Learning the kind thinking and encouraging.

Fifth session: Expressing the effect of backbiting in the absence of others and gossiping.

Sixth session: How to build positive relationships.

Seventh session: Continuing sixth session.

Eighth session: Review the basic mistakes of Adler.

Ninth session: Review your image and love.

Tenth session: General evaluation of previous meetings.

It should be noted that structure, titles and goals and some content of training sessions are quite content of schunaker, except the eighth session that is added by the researcher.

To collect the required data of this study, the following tools are used:

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale

Lowenthal scale (1996) were used to measure academic self-efficacy the. This tool is composed of 10 components and the questions is set based on a 7-degree Likert scale from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 7. The psychometric properties of this scale have been confirmed in research of Mcilroy and Bunting<sup>5</sup>. The reliability coefficient is as 0.81.

In order to analyze the effectiveness of educating encouragement on the increase of academic self-efficacy at the level of descriptive statistics the average indexes, variance and standard deviation were used and at the level of inferential statistics, the co-variance analysis test was used in this research. To do this analysis the SPSS software was used as well.

**RESULTS**

In order to get acquaintance with nature of research variable, it is necessary to describe it before analyzing the data using descriptive indexes such as mean and standard deviation.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indicators of academic self-efficacy score, at the pre-test, post-test and minus

Test	Group	Number	Minimum	Maximum	mean	Std.deviation
<b>Pre-test</b>	Control	10	37	52	41.40	4.08
	Test	10	35	49	42.90	4.78
<b>Post-test</b>	Control	10	39	49	42.30	3.68
	Test	10	47	63	55.20	5.71
<b>Minus (Pretest-posttest)</b>	Control	10	-3	5	0.9	2.55
	Test	10	8	17	12.30	2.86

According to Table 1, mean and standard deviation of academic self-efficacy score, in pre-test of the control group is as (41.40 and 4.08) and in test group as (42.90 and 4.78), in post-test of the control group as (42.30 and 3.68) and in test group as (55.20 and 5.71) and minus (posttest-pretest) in the control group as (0.9 and 2.55) and in test group as (12.30 and 2.86) respectively.

**Table 2.** Results of Levene test on the variance equality hypothesis of self-efficacy variable and its subscales in two groups.

Variables	F coefficient	df 1	df 2	Significance
<b>Talent</b>	0.109	1	18	0.745
<b>Context</b>	0.766	1	18	0.393
<b>Effort</b>	0.063	1	18	0.805
<b>Academic self-efficacy</b>	1.784	1	18	0.198

According to table 2, the results of Levene test show that academic self-efficacy variable and its subscales in control group and test have similar variance ( $p \geq 0.05$ ) in pretest level.

**Table 3.** The results of normality test of academic self-efficacy total score of both groups

Variable	Group	Number	Z static	Significance (p)
<b>Academic self- efficacy</b>	Control	10	0.783	0.571
	Test	10	0.725	0.669

According to table 3, it is observed that the distribution of related data to two variables of exam stress and academic self-efficacy are normal before the intervention of two groups of test and control ( $p \geq 0.05$ ).

**Table 4.** The results of co-variance analysis test of minus scores (pretest-posttest) self-efficacy components of experimental and control groups

Variables	Minus mean of control group	Minus mean of test group	Total squares	df	Mean squares	F	P
<b>Talent</b>	-0.1	5.40	80.00	1	80.00	27.27	0.0001
<b>Texture</b>	0.6	2.50	151.250	1	151.250	81.75	0.0001
<b>Effort</b>	0.4	4.40	18.05	1	18.05	14.18	0.001

Results of Table 4 show that there is a significant difference among the school students of the test and control groups in terms of talent ( $F=27.27$  and  $p=0.0001$ ). In other words, self-encouragement intervention training causes an increase in talent in the field of academic self-efficacy of the test group according to the average (5.40) of test group compared to the mean of control group (-0.1). The results show that there are significant differences between test and control groups in the subscale of context among the school students ( $F=81.75$  and  $p=0.0001$ ). And according to the average (2.50) of the test group compared to the average of the control group (0.6), education of self-encouragement intervention causes the increase in the subscale of context in the field of academic self-efficacy of the test group. On the other hand, there is a significant difference between the school students of test and control groups in terms of disorder in the subscale of effort ( $F=14.18$  and  $p=0.001$ ). According to the average (4.40) of the test group compared to the average of control group (0.4), self-encouragement intervention training causes the increase in efforts in the field of academic self-efficacy of test group.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to the achieved results, we conclude that encouragement education affects the increase of academic self-efficacy of school students. In fact, the scores of self-efficacy of test group after teaching encouragement education had many differences with their score at the pretest and it was improved significantly. The results of this research are in the line of the researches of Yazdanpanah<sup>6</sup> since he conducted his researches on the school students of third grade of junior high school and concluded that encouragement education affects the reduction of exam stress.

In explaining the effect of encouragement on the reduction of exam stress, it can be said that encouragement increases the self-esteem and this causes the person to know and accept his positive and negative points and do not have any fear from being incomplete and ultimately be able to focus on his problems such as exam stress and the feeling of self-efficacy to be able to solve them easily.

It can be said that the encouraged student would find a different look towards life, know his abilities and weaknesses and rely on his abilities by this knowledge and set goals for his works and try to achieve the goals. He would not pay a lot of attention to the results of work, while the process of work would become more important and will apply all of his abilities to achieve his goals. Accordingly, his stress would become less during the exam because he has done his effort, has trusted himself, has known his weaknesses and this tranquility causes to pass the exam session without stress and come to a desirable result.

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Researches that have been done in the field of encouragement and perfectionism review these two variables separately and in relation with other factors. So, this research can increase the theoretical knowledge in this field and present more knowledge from the interaction of these two variables.

The desire for completeness eliminates good interaction and creativity because the child is afraid of the risk of error. Encouragement is not to say something or doing a certain work, but it is how to do it. The aim is to increase the child's trust in him. As more we do believe in child, the more we can see the good behavior in him and give him more encouragement. Children who have low self-esteem would find discourage attitude and do not attempt when they encounter difficulties or problems. In a space that there is freedom and encouragement with mutual respect for thought, the child's self-confidence and ability to think creatively will grow up.

In a research done by Bahlmann and Dinter<sup>7</sup> on 39 people with the age limit of 20 to 60 years old, interesting results were reported. They stated that participants program were much more daring, patient and with more self-confidence than the past after participation in the Schunaker encouragement program. They were less after the completeness and had more positive view regarding the issues. Next followings showed that these changes were staying stable after the end of treatment.

Encouragement is a positive feedback that is basically focused on effort or improvement instead of result. Encouragement is understanding and acceptance and transfers the faith to the child for this pure fact that he exists. The child does not have to be the best in order to be a full human. With encouragement, a child will feel valuable regardless of the obtained results<sup>8</sup>.

Encouragement would increase the positive self-attitude and view, the sense of belonging and incompleteness daring in person and the person would not just feel valuable only when he is complete. In conclusion, encouragement gives a positive feedback of effort or improvement of people instead of focusing on result, self-acknowledgment and the awareness of his values. The person will feel valuable from what he is and accepts himself. In addition, encouragement would create a positive self-talking. As a result of these effects, the self-esteem would increase. By the increase of self-esteem, the person would not have any fear of incompleteness and making mistakes and a person who does not fear of making mistakes, will not have the abnormal exam stress.

It is suggested that the Education and Learning Department teach this method to the adolescent school students according to its easy implementation. Besides that, the encouragement education can be presented in the period of in-service educating for teachers and counselors.

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