

The effectiveness of self-determination skills training on basic psychological needs of students with externalized behavioral problems

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Abstract Introduction

Externalizing behaviors refer to a broad set of behaviors that are distressing to others (e.g., over-reactivity, impulsivity, and aggressiveness) and represent one of the most common forms of maladjustment in children. Recent reviews of the literature have provided encouraging evidence that self determination instruction may be effective in promoting self-determination skills in students with disabilities, including students with behavioral problems. Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes that human beings have three innate psychological needs-autonomy, competence, and relatedness-that serve as experiential nutriment for growth and optimal functioning. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of self- determination skills training on satisfaction basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) of students with externalized behavioral problems.

Method

Research method was quasi experimental with pre and post- test and

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control group. To achieve our goals, Thirty students who received high scores in Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) were selected and randomly assigned to experimental group (N=15) and control group (N=15). Students in experimental group participated in 10 sessions (1 session in a week) receiving self-determination skills intervention. Basic psychological needs questionnaire by participants before and after intervention was completed.

Results

Analysis of mancova was used for data analysis. The findings showed that self-determination skills training has positive effect on need for autonomy, relatedness and competence. Using the commonly used guidelines proposed by Cohen (1998), the eta squared of 0.63, 0.54, and 0.31 are typically interpreted as moderate-to-large, moderate, and small-to-moderate effect sizes respectively.

Discussion

The present study provides evidence for the effectiveness of teaching self-determination skills on basic psychological needs satisfaction of students with externalized behavioral problems. Before this study, self-determination interventions had scarcely been tested experimentally with students with behavioral problems. The results of the current study showed that when students were beginning to identify strengths and needs, students' behaviors began to improve. It is possible that students were becoming more cognizant of behavioral problems as the self determination intervention progressed and saw the positive impact it had in the classroom and home- such as increasing others reinforcement (e.g., teacher and parents praise). Therefore, students may feel more competent, autonomous and relatedness.

Keywords: self-determination skills training, externalizing problems, students, relatedness, competence, autonomy.