

The effects of reality therapy group counseling on academic self-concept in students with specific learning disorder

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Introduction

According to American Psychiatric Association, specific learning disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that begins during school-age, although may not be recognized until adulthood. Learning disabilities refers to ongoing problems in one of three areas, reading, writing and math, which are foundational to one's ability to learn, and may cause problems in learning subjects such as history, math, science and social studies and may have an impact on everyday activities. Learning disorders, if not recognized and managed, can cause problems throughout a person's life beyond having lower academic achievement. These problems include increased risk of greater psychological distress, poorer overall mental health, unemployment/under-employment and dropping out of school. Academic self-concept construct refers to self-perception and evaluation of a student on his or her self-regulation, general intellectual abilities, motivation, and creativity. Given that learning and academic self-concept are directly correlated, and experience of failure in academic achievement has effect on academic self-concept, students with specific learning disorder often have poor academic self-concept. It is important to conduct an intervention that can affect the academic self-concept of students with specific learning disorder and to prevent their vulnerability to emotional, social, behavioral, and academic problems. One of the interventions used for a wide range of mental problems and disorders is reality therapy. The present study was an effort to investigate the effectiveness of reality therapy group counseling on academic self-concept of students with specific learning disorder.

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Method

To this end, this study adopted a pre-test/post-test/follow-up design with a semi-experimental method. Thirty female primary school fifth graders took part in this study, which was carried out in 2016-17 academic year in Babolsar, Iran. Based on the results of the Colorado Learning Difficulties Questionnaire (CLDQ) and the participants' IQ scores, 15 participants were randomly assigned to the experimental group and 15 to the control group. The experimental group went through reality therapy group counseling for 8 sessions. The instruments used in the current study included the CLDQ, the second edition of Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, and the Academic Self-Concept Inventory. Adopting a repeated measures analysis of variance, the data were analyzed using SPSS-22 software.

Results

The findings of the study revealed that as the result of the reality therapy group counseling, the experimental group's academic self-concept post-test and follow-up scores were significantly higher than their control group counterpart ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present study, reality therapy group counseling is an appropriate and effective intervention for increasing the academic self-concept of the students with specific learning disorder. So, it is suggested that the reality therapy group counseling be used to prevent academic problems for these students.

Keywords: reality therapy, specific learning disorder, academic self-concept, student