



Positive Psychology Based on Cognitive and Behavioural Intervention among Adolescents with Learning Difficulties: Current and Future Application

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Abstract: As a group with "special needs," adolescent students with learning difficulties have been the subject of much social and societal attention because of the difficulties they face in both their academic and socialization processes. If these students do not receive appropriate education, the progress of society will be greatly reduced, which highlights the important practical value and significance of studying learning difficulties. Moreover, adolescents with learning difficulties commonly suffer from low academic achievement as well as low self-efficacy, which will affect their well-being in life. Both pedagogy and positive psychology have many different interventions to achieve increased student well-being or academic achievement. However, positive thinking interventions for adolescents with learning difficulties are still being explored. Therefore, this thesis will stand in the perspective of positive psychology combined with cognitive therapy to explore the common dilemmas currently faced by adolescents with learning difficulties, as well as effective measures for improvement and the dimensions of measurement needed and to provide an outlook on future related research.

Keywords: positive psychology, cognitive and behavioural intervention, learning disabilities students, adolescent

1. Introduction

Adolescent students with learning difficulties as a special group have required social understanding and attention because of the many difficulties they may face in both their academic and socialization processes[1]. If these students are not properly educated, the progress of society will be greatly diminished, thus the importance of studying the practical value and significance of learning difficulties. Therefore, it is very important to try to use positive psychology techniques to improve the academic performance and self-efficacy of adolescents with learning difficulties.

2. Literature review

2.1 Students with learning disabilities

Since the 1960s, Dr. Kirk, an American specialist in special education, has raised a new term 'learning disability' (LD), which attracts considerable attention worldwide[2].

The study by Proctor, C. L., et al showed that students with learning disabilities might have a lower level of self-awareness than the average student. They had certain emotional, social adjustment or behavioral problems and have a tendency to have low self-confidence, self-loathing, and self-depreciation[3]. Moreover, in terms of academic adjustment, students with learning difficulties are poorer than average in the learning motivation, learning expectations, approaches to learning and willpower as well[4]. Malboeuf-Hurtubise, C., et al noted that children with learning difficulties show more behavioral problems in the aspects of social proficiency, organization, sense of responsibility and may even indicate more task abandonment, poor attention and more classroom disruptions[5]. In addition to problem behavior, children with learning difficulties have low social skills and show poor task competence, lack of activity skills and few hobbies after school [6].

The factors that cause students with learning difficulties are multifaceted, such as interpersonal barriers, which are mainly manifested in the communication with teachers and classmates. 88% of LD students cannot communicate well with teachers and 76% cannot get along well with classmates[7]. They are at a disadvantage when engaging in learning activities at school and have poor experiences in life [8]. The purpose of this study is to discuss whether positive thinking helps to improve life satisfaction and self-efficacy as well as academic performance of adolescents with learning difficulties[9].

Moreover, through the research of Anat Shoshani et al., it can notice that positive psychology intervention (PPI) can reduce the distress and anxiety of junior high school students and improve self-esteem and self-efficacy[10]. For high school and college populations, there is also empirical evidence that PPI has a huge impact on reducing anxiety symptoms,

improving learning motivation and happiness [11].

2.2 Cognitive behavioral intervention in positive psychology

Cognitive psychology differs from historical approaches to psychotherapy, such as psychoanalytic therapists looking for subconscious meanings behind behavior and then coming up with a diagnosis. It is based on the belief that distorted thinking and maladaptive behavior play an important role in the development and maintenance of psychological disorders, that symptoms and associated distress can be reduced by teaching new information processing skills and coping mechanisms[12].

Previous research has found that direct efforts to improve the cognitive abilities and learning skills of LD students are often ineffective. As a result, research has become more in-depth and ecological, researchers have begun to incorporate non-intellectual factors (psychological characteristics, environmental factors) of students with learning difficulties into the research. With the gradual improvement of theoretical research, the empirical study of the psychological characteristics of learning difficulties has also become a frontier of research. In recent years more and more scholars have begun to turn their attention to interventions for students with learning difficulties and built-up theoretical systems for practical research [13]. The Integrated Intervention proposes a combined cognitive and behavioral intervention model, which provides intervention for symptoms such as inattention, impulsivity, and excessive activity caused by behavioral disorders in students with learning difficulties and psychological intervention, including:

Cognitive therapy: correction of distorted, irrational and negative beliefs and ideals, so that the emotions and behavior of students with learning difficulties can be changed accordingly.

Behavioral therapy: proposed for the correction of inappropriate behavior and the development of good behavior in students and includes monetary rewards, incentives, and behavioral shaping. There are a number of other psychological intervention approaches, play therapy, music therapy, etc. Educational interventions (including early intervention) aim at preventing academic underachievement[14]. It is to develop educational measures that are appropriate to the student's actual abilities, to enable the adolescent to experience a sense of achievement through continuous success, through develop self-confidence and self-identification to increase the student's level of self-awareness, actively learn and to develop correct attribution styles including learning by example, learning by choice, attribution reframing, and behavioral training [15].

2.3 Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a key psychological construct within the positive psychology movement and a meaningful indicator and determinant of well-being in children and adolescents[16]. Hidayat & Mansur mentioned that PERMA is a positive full mediator which means that students with achievement goals with high PERMA are likely to have good life satisfaction[17]. Other research has shown a statistically significant positive relationship between self-determination and life satisfaction among the disadvantaged teenagers[18]. However, few studies have set their goal to improve life satisfaction among students with LD.

2.4 Self-efficacy and academic performance

In the study by Hassanzaseh et al., can learn that students' self-efficacy directly affects their test scores[19]. Bandura concluded that people with low self-efficacy do not believe in their ability to do one thing well and instead focus on the negative consequences of failure, which affects all aspects of their lives[20]. Students with low self-efficacy also attribute their negative experiences and bad outcomes to their own negative intrinsic traits. This cognitive incompetence often increases test anxiety and has a greater impact on test scores [21]. Therefore, reducing test anxiety can be achieved by enhancing self-confidence and improving self-efficacy. As for how to improve self-efficacy, some research suggests that students can build courage and self-esteem by recalling past grades[22].

There are currently many different interventions in both pedagogy and positive psychology to achieve the same goals, namely student well-being or academic achievement[23-24]. However, there are still relatively few positive thinking interventions for adolescents, and the schools choose to intervene are mostly Western institutions, so it is significant to add localized relevant research in China.

3. Future directions

Regarding future research directions, the developmental characteristics, influences and physiological mechanisms of self-regulated learning in adolescents and the brain mechanisms of self-regulated learning need to be considered within intervention programs and further deepen the field of research on self-regulated learning by combining cognitive regulation, motivational regulation, emotional regulation, and behavioral regulation, as well as by combining grade differences and high

and low levels of self-regulation with specific self-regulated learning [25].

Therefore, positive psychology interventions in the form of classes, speaking of a combination of gratitude interventions, hope interventions, etc., can be tried together when implementing intervention programs. And four indicators with high validity can be used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention:

(1) Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)

The SLSS is used to assess the overall level of life satisfaction of children and adolescents aged 8 to 18[26]. The SLSS consists of seven items in a 6-point Likert-type response format, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), indicating a students' overall level of life satisfaction, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction with life.

(2) Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ)

The ASCQ was developed to understand students' academic self-concept levels on the basis of the Academic Self-Esteem subscale[27-28]. The questionnaire contains 20 items assessing students' perceptions of their academic confidence and effort in their studies. This Scale was found to be effective for students with learning disabilities[29].

(3) Brief Symptom Inventory 18 (BSI-18)

The BSI-18 is based on the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised and the BSI, one of the scales used to assess psychological distress, contains three six-item scales of somatization, depression, and anxiety, with the sum of all items weighted in the general factor of psychological distress [30-31].

(4) General Self-Efficacy Scale(GSES)

The Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) consists of the original scale consisting of 17 items Scored on a 5-point Likert scale[32].

4. Conclusion

The use of positive psychology to enhance the academic performance and self-efficacy of adolescents with learning difficulties is of great importance. Further discussion of the differences in the utility of positive thinking interventions among gender-specific adolescents, as well as exploring the application of school-based CBT interventions in additional school settings, may be warranted in the future.

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