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Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Education on Enhancing Academic Resilience and Self-Regulation in Adolescent Girls

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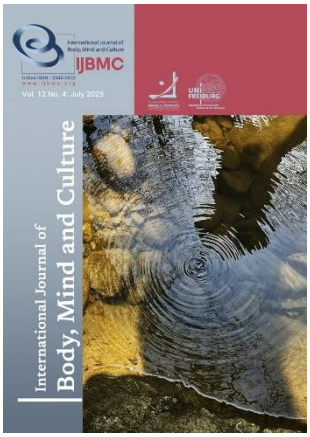

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of an emotion-focused educational program on academic resilience and self-regulation skills in female high school students experiencing academic decline.

Methods and Materials: A quasi-experimental study with a pre-test, post-test, and one-month follow-up design was conducted. A total of 40 female students from Qarchak City, Iran, were selected through convenience sampling and randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n = 20) or a control group (n = 20). The intervention included eight 90-minute sessions of emotion-focused education. Academic resilience and self-regulation were assessed using validated scales. Data were analyzed using repeated-measures ANOVA, with effect sizes reported.

Findings: Significant improvements were observed in the experimental group compared to the control group for both academic resilience ($F(1, 42) = 270.440$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.676$) and self-regulation ($F(1, 64) = 293.565$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.665$). Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed sustained improvements from pre-test to post-test ($p < .001$) and from pre-test to follow-up ($p < .001$). The experimental group demonstrated an average increase of 25.4% in resilience scores and 10.7% in self-regulation scores, while no significant changes occurred in the control group.

Conclusion: The emotion-focused educational program effectively enhanced academic resilience and self-regulation in students experiencing academic decline, with sustained effects at follow-up. However, the study's limitations, including a small sample size and convenience sampling, should be taken into account. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of emotion-focused interventions across various educational settings.

Keywords: Emotion-Focused Education, Academic Resilience, Self-Regulation, Adolescent.

Introduction

Academic success is a crucial determinant of a student's future opportunities and overall well-being. However, many students struggle with academic decline, characterized by a significant decrease in academic performance over time. Factors contributing to this decline include poor self-regulation skills, emotional distress, lack of motivation, and inability to cope with academic challenges (Zimmerman, 2023). Among the psychological constructs that influence academic performance, academic resilience and self-regulation play a pivotal role in helping students adapt to challenges and maintain their academic trajectory (Abdolali et al., 2023; Cassidy et al., 2023; Suardi Wekke et al., 2022).

In recent years, educational psychology has emphasized emotion-focused educational programs as a

means of fostering self-regulation and resilience in students who experience academic difficulties (Pekrun et al.). These interventions aim to enhance students' ability to manage emotions, cope with stress, and develop adaptive learning strategies, ultimately improving academic outcomes (England-Mason & Gonzalez, 2020). However, despite the growing interest in this approach, research on the application of emotion-focused education in addressing academic decline remains scarce, particularly among female high school students. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the effectiveness of an emotion-focused educational program in enhancing academic resilience and self-regulation among female students experiencing academic difficulties.

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt and recover from adversity while maintaining psychological well-being (Masten & Reed, 2004). In the context of education, academic resilience refers to a student's capacity to persevere in the face of academic challenges, setbacks, and failures (Hansen, 2025; Panganiban et al., 2025; Romano et al., 2021). Students with high academic resilience tend to use effective problem-solving strategies, maintain a growth mindset, and seek social support when faced with difficulties (Sarwar et al., 2025). Studies have demonstrated that academically resilient students are more likely to engage in self-regulated learning, set realistic goals, and maintain high levels of motivation, even in stressful learning environments (Shengyao et al., 2024). Conversely, students with low resilience often struggle with academic disengagement, learned helplessness, and emotional distress, which can lead to further academic decline (Bazaz & Farhadian, 2025; Gutiérrez-de-Rozas et al., 2022).

Factors that influence academic resilience include personal traits (such as self-efficacy and emotional intelligence), social support (from family, teachers, and peers), and coping mechanisms (such as problem-solving and cognitive reappraisal). Educational interventions that enhance resilience often focus on emotional regulation, cognitive restructuring, and adaptive learning strategies, all of which contribute to improved academic performance and psychological well-being (Pascual-Leone et al., 2019).

Self-regulation refers to a student's ability to control emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in pursuit of academic goals (Zimmerman, 1998, 2013, 2023). Self-regulated learners engage in goal-setting, strategic planning, self-monitoring, and self-reflection, which enhance their ability to manage time, reduce procrastination, and improve learning outcomes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Research has shown that students with strong self-regulation skills tend to exhibit higher levels of academic achievement, lower anxiety, and better stress management compared to those with poor self-regulation abilities (Morris et al., 2007). Moreover, self-regulation is closely linked to motivation, as students who can effectively regulate their emotions and behaviors are more likely to persist through challenges, stay focused, and develop adaptive learning habits (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019). A key component of self-regulated learning is emotional regulation, which allows students to manage academic stress, anxiety, and frustration (Davis et al., 2009). Students who struggle with self-regulation often experience difficulty concentrating, high levels of test anxiety, and a tendency to procrastinate, all of which contribute to academic underperformance (Edossa et al., 2018).

Given the critical role of self-regulation in academic success, educational interventions that promote self-regulated learning strategies are essential. Recent studies suggest that emotion-focused educational programs can help students develop better self-regulation skills by teaching cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, and behavioral regulation techniques (Atmaca et al., 2020). Emotion-focused educational programs are designed to enhance students' emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-regulation by teaching techniques such as mindfulness, stress management, cognitive restructuring, and emotional expression (England-Mason & Gonzalez, 2020). These interventions aim to help students recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions, leading to enhanced psychological well-being and improved academic performance (Kimber & Sandell, 2009). Research on emotion-focused education has shown promising results in various contexts. For example, Taiminen et al. (2021) demonstrated that emotional regulation training led to significant improvements in self-regulation and goal attainment in student-athletes (Tamminen et al., 2021).

Despite these findings, there is a limited body of research on the application of emotion-focused educational programs in addressing academic decline among high school students. While previous studies have

focused on college students, clinical populations, or general well-being, few have examined how these interventions impact female students experiencing academic challenges (Ragusa et al., 2023). Furthermore, most existing interventions focus on cognitive-behavioral strategies rather than emotion-focused techniques, leaving a gap in understanding how emotion regulation directly influences self-regulated learning and academic resilience (Pascual-Leone et al., 2019).

Although previous research has established the importance of resilience and self-regulation in academic success, there is a lack of studies that explore the effectiveness of emotion-focused educational programs in addressing academic decline. Most existing studies focus on general resilience training rather than its specific application in academic settings. Do not specifically target female students, who may experience unique emotional and educational challenges. There is a lack of long-term follow-up to assess whether the benefits of the intervention persist over time. This study aims to fill these gaps by evaluating the impact of an emotion-focused educational program on academic resilience and self-regulation in female high school students. The findings will contribute to the growing body of research on educational psychology and provide practical recommendations for teachers, counselors, and educational policymakers.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test, post-test, and follow-up to evaluate the effectiveness of an emotion-focused educational program on academic resilience and self-regulation skills in female high school students experiencing academic decline. The study included an experimental group that received the intervention and a control group that received no treatment.

The statistical population consisted of all female high school students experiencing academic decline in Qarchak City, Iran, during the 2023-24 academic year. Academic decline was defined as a decrease of at least 10% in GPA compared to the previous semester. A total of 40 students were selected using convenience sampling and then randomly assigned to the experimental group (n = 20) or the control group (n = 20) using computer-generated randomization. The study aimed to minimize selection bias by ensuring that participants in both groups had similar demographic and academic characteristics. A power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 software, which indicated that a minimum of 38 participants was required to detect a moderate effect size (f = 0.30) with 80% power at an α level of 0.05.

Participants were included if they: Were enrolled in grades 10 to 12 in high school, had experienced academic decline (≥10% GPA reduction) in the past semester, and were willing to participate and had parental consent. Exclusion criteria included: a diagnosis of a psychological disorder requiring specialized treatment (based on school counselor assessment), participation in other psychological or educational interventions during the study period, and missing more than two sessions of the intervention.

Instruments

The data collection instruments included the Academic Resilience Inventory (ARI) by Samuels (2004), adapted in Iran by Soltaninejad et al. (2014), which consists of 29 items measuring communication skills, future orientation, and problem-focused coping. The reliability of the original version, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.89, whereas the Iranian adaptation yielded reliability coefficients ranging from 0.62 to 0.77. Academic self-regulation was assessed using Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) Self-Regulation Questionnaire, which consists of 47 items divided into motivational beliefs and self-regulated learning strategies. This instrument assesses self-efficacy, intrinsic goal orientation, test anxiety, cognitive strategy use, and metacognitive self-regulation, with reported reliability coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.89.

Intervention

The Emotion-Focused Educational Program was an eight-session intervention delivered over four weeks, with each 90-minute session held twice weekly by a trained psychologist specializing in emotional and academic resilience, grounded in Gross's (2007) Emotion Regulation Model—the program aimed to enhance participants' emotional awareness, regulation, and adaptive coping strategies. Sessions progressed from foundational skills—such as recognizing emotions

and identifying emotional triggers—to advanced techniques like cognitive reappraisal, behavioral regulation, and stress management. The content included interactive discussions, structured exercises, and skills training in areas such as interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and relaxation. The final session focused on consolidating gains, planning for real-life application, and addressing potential barriers to sustaining emotional regulation practices.

Data Analysis

Before statistical analysis, the dataset was examined for errors, missing values, and outliers. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize demographic data and research variables. A repeated-measures ANOVA was applied to test the research hypotheses and compare the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up scores between the experimental and control groups. To ensure statistical assumptions were met, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Levene's, and Box's M tests were used to examine data normality, variance homogeneity, and covariance matrix equality, respectively. Pre-test, post-test, and follow-up assessments were conducted for both groups, and data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26. The significance level was set at $p<0.05$.

Findings and Results

The results indicated that most of the participating students were 18 years old (32.5%), with an average age of 16.67 years. Additionally, the majority of participants were 11th-grade students (37.5%).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables by Group and Study Phases

Variable	Indicator	Experimental			Control		
		Pre-test	Post-test	Follow-up	Pre-test	Post-test	Follow-up
Academic Resilience	Mean	71.80	90.00	89.30	79.35	79.70	79.20
	SD	5.04	4.42	4.13	3.73	3.75	4.06
Academic Self-Regulation	Mean	136.15	150.85	150.50	135.05	136.90	136.65
	SD	5.44	5.10	5.28	4.22	4.32	4.41

Before applying statistical techniques, it is essential to determine whether the collected data follows a normal distribution. If the data is normally distributed, parametric tests can be used for hypothesis testing; otherwise, non-parametric tests must be applied. To assess normality, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted. These tests compare the observed cumulative distribution function with the expected cumulative distribution for a given variable.

In interpreting the results, if the significance level is greater than 0.05, the observed distribution does not differ significantly from the theoretical distribution, meaning that the data follow a normal distribution. However, if the significance level is less than 0.05, the observed distribution deviates from normality. To assess the significance of the intervention's effectiveness, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted, with the results presented below. Before applying ANOVA, its assumptions were tested using Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro-Wilk, Levene's test, Box's M test, and Mauchly's test, as detailed below.

Table 2

Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Tests for Normality of Research Variables (Pre-Test Stage)

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk	Kolmogorov-Smirnov
Pre-test Academic Resilience (Experimental Group)	W = 0.932, p = 0.170	K = 0.137, p = 0.200
Pre-test Academic Resilience (Control Group)	W = 0.953, p = 0.422	K = 0.141, p = 0.200
Pre-test Academic Self-Regulation (Experimental Group)	W = 0.922, p = 0.108	K = 0.139, p = 0.200
Pre-test Academic Self-Regulation (Control Group)	W = 0.914, p = 0.075	K = 0.152, p = 0.200

As shown in Table 2, the null hypothesis that the distribution of scores follows a normal distribution is retained for all research variables, indicating that the sample scores are normally distributed (all p-values are

greater than 0.05). Levene's test was then conducted to examine the homogeneity of variances in the dependent variables, academic resilience and self-regulation, across the three stages of the study.

Table 3

Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variances

Variable	Stage	F	df1	df2	p-value
Academic Resilience	Pre-test	0.631	1	38	0.432
	Post-test	1.085	1	38	0.304
	Follow-up	0.034	1	38	0.855
Academic Self-Regulation	Pre-test	0.699	1	38	0.408
	Post-test	0.171	1	38	0.682
	Follow-up	0.799	1	38	0.799

As seen in Table 3, the assumption of equal variances across groups is confirmed for both academic resilience and self-regulation. Box's M test was conducted to examine the equality of covariance matrices in the dependent variables across the three stages.

Table 4

Box's M Test for Equality of Covariances

Variable	Box's M	F	df1	df2	p-value
Academic Resilience	38.866	5.920	6	10,462	0.001
Academic Self-Regulation	61.556	9.376	6	11,354	0.001

As seen in Table 4, the assumption of equal variances for academic resilience is violated. However, due to the random selection of participants, validity of the research instruments, and equal group sizes, the F-test remains robust against minor violations of assumptions. Mauchly's test was performed to assess sphericity, which ensures that the variances of the differences between all possible pairs of conditions are equal.

Table 5

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

Variable	W Statistic	df	p-value
Academic Resilience	0.195	2	0.001
Academic Self-Regulation	0.825	2	0.028

As seen in Table 5, the assumption of sphericity is violated. Therefore, the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied in the repeated-measures ANOVA. The results of the repeated-measures ANOVA for the emotion-focused educational program on academic resilience and self-regulation are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Repeated-Measures ANOVA Results

Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Effect Size
Academic Resilience	Time	2155.217	1.108	1945.399	270.440	0.001	0.676
	Time × Group	2100.617	1.108	1896.115	263.589	0.001	0.454
	Error	302.833	42.098	7.193	-	-	-
Academic Self-Regulation	Time	1355.550	1.702	796.556	293.565	0.001	0.665
	Time × Group	1460.317	1.702	858.120	316.254	0.001	0.632
	Error	175.467	64.667	2.713	-	-	-

The results confirm a significant interaction between time and group membership for both academic resilience and self-regulation ($p<0.001$). The effect sizes indicate that 45% and 63% of the variance in academic

resilience and self-regulation, respectively, can be attributed to group differences and intervention effects.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of an emotion-focused educational program on academic resilience and self-regulation in high school students experiencing academic decline. The findings of this study indicate that implementing an emotion-focused educational program led to an increase in academic resilience and self-regulation skills in the experimental group, which remained stable during the follow-up stage. Other studies have demonstrated similar effects of emotion-focused interventions. Ghorpade (2023) demonstrated that emotion-focused therapy is a practical approach for enhancing self-esteem and resilience in orphaned children (Ghorpade, 2023). Taiminen et al. (2021) found that emotional regulation skills training improved self-regulation and goal attainment in athletes (Tamminen et al., 2021). Gagne et al. (2021) conducted a study on 63 adolescents in Texas, USA, showing that emotion regulation training significantly enhanced students' academic self-regulation (Gagne & Lydon, 2001; Gagne et al., 2021). Pascual-Leone et al. (2019) found that emotion-focused therapy improved emotional resilience, and these changes remained effective in follow-up stages (Pascual-Leone et al., 2019). Price et al. (2018) demonstrated that improving emotional regulation skills contributed to better academic self-regulation and learning outcomes (Price et al., 2018).

In explaining these findings, numerous researchers argue that academic success cannot be achieved without social and emotional competence (Murray et al., 2015). Children who feel competent, autonomous, and emotionally balanced are more likely to achieve academic success. Students with higher emotional and social skills tend to be more resilient, responsible, and capable of independent learning and self-regulation.

Emotion-focused therapy (EFT) helps individuals recognize and modify negative emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a step-by-step approach. Since this therapy focuses on addressing unresolved emotions, it significantly contributes to reducing maladaptive emotions and enhancing resilience and self-regulation behaviors in students. Through EFT, students learn to identify, adjust, and manage their emotions and those of others. Many students with low academic resilience and self-regulation experience intense negative emotions, such as shame, embarrassment, or social withdrawal. In these cases, identifying, expressing, and replacing maladaptive emotions can lead to positive changes.

The intervention teaches students how to label and understand their emotions, which plays a crucial role in emotional regulation. For example, students are asked to write about distressing events and the emotions associated with them, and then explore alternative emotional responses they could adopt. These assignments help students replace maladaptive emotions with more adaptive responses. During therapy sessions, the therapist provides empathetic support, helping students feel heard and validated, which encourages them to express their emotions. Techniques such as validation demonstrate that students' emotional responses are acceptable, allowing them to express suppressed emotions without fear of judgment or criticism.

The sample was limited to female students experiencing academic decline in Qarchak City during the 2023-24 academic year. The primary data collection tool was self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Although the study facilitator provided in-person explanations, there is always a degree of subjectivity in responses. The study did not include a long-term follow-up to examine the lasting effects of the intervention. Given that emotion-focused training enhances academic resilience, education authorities and schools should identify students with low resilience and self-regulation and offer training workshops to improve these skills. Greater emphasis should be placed on emotional-social education to enhance self-regulation in students. Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of emotion-focused training on both male and female students. The impact of emotion-focused training on students with other behavioral challenges or learning disabilities should be examined. The follow-up period should be extended to at least four months to assess the long-term effects of the intervention. The differences in the effectiveness of emotion-focused training should be explored between students with high and low levels of academic decline.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study included the fact that participation was entirely optional. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Varamin-Pishva Branch (Approval No. 2023-3482).

Transparency of Data

By the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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