

The effectiveness of a training program based on Erikson's theory in developing independence skills among students with learning disabilities in Jordan

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Abstract: This study aimed at identifying the effectiveness of a training program based on Erikson's theory in developing independence skills among students with learning disabilities in Jordan. The study population consisted of students with learning disabilities enrolled in resource rooms in public basic schools in Mafraq city for the academic year 2007/2008. The study sample consisted of sixty male and female students from the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in the schools of Mafraq city, who were diagnosed by the resource room teacher as students with LDs. The sample was divided equally into two experimental and control groups. To achieve the objectives of the study, a collective training program was built, and the program included various activities and events carried out by the researcher and the resource room teacher in different ways and methods. The results of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha < 0.05$) in the independence skills between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test, and the difference was in favor of the experimental group. The results also showed no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha < 0.05$) in independence skills due to the interaction between gender and group variables on the post-test. There are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha < 0.05$) in the independence skills between the experimental and control group on the follow-up test, and the differences were in favor of the experimental group. The results were discussed in the light of the theoretical framework of the study and the results of previous studies and research in the field, then a set of educational recommendations and proposed studies were presented.

Keywords: Erikson's theory, students with LDs, independence skills

INTRODUCTION

Mercer (1992) mentions that in the seventies of the last century, several studies appeared that aimed to study the social aspects of children with learning disabilities. These studies concluded with the existence of several symptoms that appear on such students, such as lack of social realization, lack of self-concept, and distraction in

attention. Therefore, the social development of students with learning disabilities and other similar segments received more attention in the eighties of the same century, and this interest is continuing, as the number of research and studies in this field increased to find effective solutions (Al-Bustanji, 2002). This field has originated in the United States of America, and it quickly began to move to other Arab and foreign countries. In Jordan, the field of education witnessed a comprehensive review of the educational process in the late eighties of the last century. Education Law No.3 of 1994 states that education is a social necessity and learning is a right for all. Princess Tharwat College in Jordan is considered an important edifice and landmark in the Arab world, which aims to prepare the teacher who can deal with students with learning disabilities, diagnostically and curatively, in a specialized educational environment, which is the resource room. This development was demonstrated by the increase in the number of resource rooms in the public and private sectors, where the number of students benefiting from these rooms until the academic year (2004/2005) was (8162) male and female students. Students with LDs had an estimated percentage of (10-12%) of the number of students in public basic schools within the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Ministry of Education, 1999).

As explained by Hallahan, Kauffman, Lyod, and Martinez (2007), children who suffer from learning disabilities show a disparity between their actual mental abilities and the real level of performance on their part, due to basic disorders in the learning process which may or may not be accompanied by a clear imbalance in the functioning of the central nervous system. These disorders are not considered secondary to mental retardation, educational cultural deprivation, or severe emotional disturbance. It is possible to refer to the proposal described by Kirk and Chalfant (1988), and from here this study came to meet this need.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness of a training program based on Erikson's theory in developing the independence skills of resource room students with learning disabilities. The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test due to the training program?

2. Are there any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test due to gender and group and the interaction between them?

3. Are there any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test due to follow-up?

To answer the previous questions, the following hypotheses were developed:

- There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha < 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test due to the training program.

- There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test due to gender and group and the interaction between them.

- There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test due to follow-up.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study stems from the importance of the learning disability category and their need for someone to raise their level to normal, through a training program to develop their independence. Developing independence for students enables them to self-regulate their emotions, in addition to controlling their body movements. This could happen through a set of activities that the teacher devises for students to help them control themselves and those around them and thus contribute to developing their sense of independence, which makes them more self-confident, and even provides them with appropriate opportunities for cognitive, social and emotional development. Thus, the student will be able to obtain a moral concept of distinguishing between permissible behavior and not allowed behavior. However, if the student in the achievement stage mastered the knowledge and mental skills, he will develop a sense of achievement. Erikson argues, as stated in (Abu Ghazal, 2006) that the student's concept of himself depends on the skills he learns and the extent of his achievement, so the teacher must orient students towards challenging skills that match their abilities.

Delimitations of the study

This study is limited to a sample of students who suffer from learning disabilities and who are enrolled in resource rooms in public schools in Mafraq city in Jordan. The results of this study are also determined by the validity and reliability of the tools used, as they were prepared by the researcher. The results of this study are determined by the extent of resource room teachers' ability to apply the training program and the ability to measure their response to the scale that has been prepared for this purpose.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars of special education and those working in this field agree that special education is primarily concerned with the design of educational programs and educational methods for students who need special educational care, and accordingly, it can be said that children with learning disabilities must be covered by services of special education.

Since we do not disagree with the current trends in special education that focus on issues related to learning disabilities; It is necessary to confront this problem and study it using scientific methods, and to draw the appropriate strategy to try to reach projects solutions or at least to mitigate its severity.

Accordingly, it was necessary to clarify the importance of treating cases of learning disabilities in the early school stages, studying the manifestations and symptoms of this condition, and finding appropriate programs and methods to teach this group in the different educational stages to improve their academic achievement. The multiplicity of sources in the field of learning disabilities has been reflected in the adoption by governmental and non-governmental organizations, psychologists and educators, of different definitions and theoretical premises, and each of them emphasizes certain characteristics, dimensions, or aspects.

Erikson's psychosocial development theory

Erikson believes that every age stage has social requirements that the child must fulfill to ensure sound social development. He argues that Man is exposed during his life cycle to a large and successive number of social pressures imposed on him by various social institutions, and these pressures constitute problems that people must solve. Erikson suggests a concept for each one of these problems, and the person must work hard to solve every crisis he faces in a positive way to achieve the requirements of social growth and continue its normal development (Hassan, 1989).

Erikson believes that the individual's identity grows through a series of psychosocial development crises, which lead to the growth or regression of the personality and makes the personality more or less integrated. Erikson believes that the individual is forced to interact with broad societal groups, and through this interaction, the individual has an opportunity to develop a normal personality capable of perceiving and understanding himself, and the world around him (Abu Ghazal, 2006).

The relationship between independence skills and learning disabilities

There is a close relationship between independence skills and learning disabilities. A student who lacks independence skills is unable to maintain the cleanliness of his external appearance and cannot arrange his books by himself and becomes more dependent on others. As for the student who lacks independence skills, he cannot initiate conversations, does not establish a relationship with others, and does not participate in activities. Therefore, it was necessary to focus on the independence skills of students with LDs through a training program to develop these skills among these students. Al-Zayat (1998) argues that studies and research conducted in the field of social disabilities indicate that children with LDs lack social skills in dealing with peers, they also lack sensitivity to others and appropriate

awareness of social situations and that they suffer from social rejection, and personal and social maladaptation.

Haroun (2004) mentions that many studies confirm that the weakness of social skills among people with learning disabilities is related to the level of social ostracism that people with learning disabilities receive from their ordinary peers. The results of many studies confirm the importance of social skills for people with learning disabilities as prerequisites for success in school work and in different aspects of life, which means the importance of gaining them to increase the rate of social growth with others, and then their social acceptance.

Previous studies

Al-Bustanji (2002) explored the level of social interactions for students with LDs with ordinary students in Amman to identify the level of social interactions for students with LDs with ordinary students. The study sample consisted of (284) male and female students with LDs. The Social Interactions Scale was used as a tool. The results showed that the social interactions of students with LDs with ordinary students are positive and that students with learning disabilities from the fifth-grade level have more positive social interactions than those of students at the second-grade level. The students with reading difficulties have social interactions with ordinary students are more than students with mixed learning difficulties. The results showed no differences in the social interactions of students with LDs with ordinary students according to gender variables, the nature of the single-sex and mixed school, and the number of years students joined the resource rooms.

Dyson (2003) investigated the conditions of children with learning difficulties within the family context, comparing them with their siblings in general self-concept, academic self-concept, and social adequacy. This study aimed at identifying the academic self-concept, social adequacy, and behavioral problems among children with learning difficulties within the family context. The sample of the study consisted of 38 male and female children aged from 8-13. The results of the study showed no differences between children with LDs compared to their siblings in general self-concept and academic self-concept. The results also showed that the estimation of parents of children with learning difficulties was less in the subject of social adequacy, while they showed less social adequacy than their siblings according to parents' estimations.

Awwad and Sherbet (2004) identified the nature of the differences in the components of social competence (teacher preferred behavior, peer preferred behavior, school conformity behavior) among outstanding and normal students and those with learning difficulties, and the extent to which social competence differs among students according to gender. The study sample consisted of (160) male and female students of the fourth grade of primary school, consisting of forty-three

outstanding students, eighty-one ordinary male and female students, and thirty-six male and female students of the fourth grade of primary school with learning difficulties. The tools of the study consisted of a list of distinctive behavioral indicators for outstanding students and a list of behavioral indicators characteristic of people with learning disabilities. The results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between outstanding and normal students, as well as those with learning disabilities in social competence and school adjustment, in favor of the talented students. There were no differences between males and females in social competence and school compatibility.

Al-Qudah (2004) investigated the psychosocial adjustment among students with LDs in the city of Amman and its relationship to academic achievement, gender, and type of school. The sample consisted of (190) male and female students with LDs enrolled in resource rooms in public and private Amman schools. The results of the study indicated that the level of psychosocial adjustment among students with LDs in the areas of relationships with peers and the teacher was negative, and there was a positive correlation between psychological adjustment, social and academic achievement of these students.

Haroun (2004) identified the types of deficits in social skills that students with LDs suffer in regular classes, and also highlighted the components of specialized strategies in the treatment of deficits in these skills. The study relied on the descriptive approach, where the researcher reviewed the various writings, research, and studies on this subject. The results showed that students with learning disabilities show various types of deficits in social skills as a result of many factors responsible for their lack of acceptance by their peers and teachers. The researcher referred to a variety of specialized strategies that lead to improving the social acceptance behavior of these students, and then enable them to perform tasks related to academic achievement.

Al-Saaydeh (2004) investigated the effectiveness of a training program in developing social skills among students with learning disabilities. The sample consisted of 30 students who were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups. After applying the training program to the experimental group and using the social skills assessment system scale before and after the experiment, it was found that the students in the experimental group are more effective in social interaction skills with others than the students of the control group.

Abu Zaid (2005) explored the effect of a training program on developing motivation for academic achievement and academic self-concept for children with learning disabilities. The study sample consisted of forty-nine male and female students who were divided into two experimental and control groups. The results of the study showed the effectiveness of involving students with learning disabilities in

the activities of the programs prepared by teachers to develop the motivation for academic achievement by supporting students' experiences in the academic field to increase their achievements, and to improve their self-concept.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides information on the methodology of the present study, which includes population and sample, research instrument, and validity and reliability of the instrument.

Population and sample

The study population consisted of resource room students with LDs in the schools of the Directorate of Education in Mafraq city, whose number was (298) male and female students, and their ages ranged between (8-12) years, from the third, fourth, fifth and sixth primary grades, distributed among eighteen resources rooms. The study sample was chosen from four schools that were selected out of eighteen schools using the simple random method. Sixty were chosen; thirty males and thirty females, who are diagnosed with learning disabilities and enrolled in the resource rooms, and they were divided into an experimental group and a control group.

Instruments of the study

First: the training program

The training program represents a set of tasks that the researcher trained resource room teachers on, according to an organized and pre-prepared plan. The researcher aims to use the program to train students with learning disabilities on independence skills.

The researcher used Erikson's theory in building the training program, where this theory is based on the assumption that personality is formed in all life stages in which a person lives from birth to late adulthood (Santrok, 2003). Erikson viewed human growth and development as a series of conflicts. The personality must struggle and overcome a special conflict at each stage. Erikson called this confrontation or challenge the crisis that the individual must solve and confront. He also believed that facing any task or crisis at any age leads to two possible results, either he masters this task and therefore a positive characteristic is built in the human personality and further development occurs, or he does not master this task and therefore a negative characteristic is integrated into the personality of the individual. The personality does not show normal growth except when each crisis is resolved positively and it has the strength to confront critical stages of growth.

Second: the independence skills scale

The researcher used the relevant studies to develop a scale to measure independence skills among students with learning disabilities. The researcher also reviewed other scales such as the social behavior scale developed by Merrill (1998), the social adaptation scale for children of the age group (12-16) years prepared by Al-

Assaad (1994), the scale of the level of adaptive behavior for children and the scale of dependent behavior prepared by Al-Banna (1996), and using the theoretical literature on the subject.

Validity of the instrument

Content validity

The validity of a scale is to investigate whether the scale measures what we want it to measure and not something else (Thorndike and Higgin, 1989). The validity of the content was achieved by presenting the scale to (15) judges from faculty members at the College of Higher Educational Studies at Amman Arab University, Princess Tharwat College, the University of Jordan, and Zarqa Private University, who are specialized in expressing their views on the extent to which each statement belongs to the dimension specified for it, the clarity of the language, and adding or modifying any statement they deem appropriate and necessary. The researcher relied on the consensus of 80% of the judges as a criterion for accepting the statement; the comments of more than 20% were a sufficient criterion to modify, delete or add some statements.

Construct validity

Construct validity is the scale's ability to verify the validity of a hypothesis derived from the theoretical framework and related studies (Al-Rusan, 1999). To reach this type of validity, the researcher extracted the discriminatory ability of the statements by distinguishing through the method of the two extreme groups and the connection of the statement to the total score of the scale. To verify the discrimination ability, the instrument was applied to an initial (experimental) sample consisting of (100) male and female students in regular classes other than the original study sample.

Reliability of the instrument

Reliability is one of the conditions that must be met in the instrument to be appropriate and accurate because it indicates consistency and accuracy in the set of test scores that are supposed to measure. Reliability means that the test gives the same results if it is re-applied to the same individuals and in the same circumstances (Thorndike and Higgin, 1989). The researcher has used Cronbach Alpha to measure the reliability of the scale.

It is another method for estimating the reliability coefficient, which depends on the analysis of the internal structure of the test (Allam, 2000). The scale was applied to a sample of (100) male and female students, and the reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha equation, which is an indicator of the scale's internal consistency. The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was (0.85), and this value is a good indicator of the scale's stability.

Result and discussion

Results of the first question

To answer the first question, the mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each of the experimental and control groups in the post-test, as shown in Table (1).

Table (1)

The mean scores and standard deviations of the scores of the experimental and control groups on the pre and post-independence test

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation
Experimental	49.344	5.527	75.037	4.295
Control	46.638	6.638	47.966	6.536

The mean score of the experimental group on the post-test was (75.037), while the mean score of the control group was (47.966). To identify the statistical significance of the differences between the two scores, the combined analysis of variance (ANCOVA) was used, and the results are presented in Table (2).

Table (2)

The results of the ANCOVA analysis of the differences between the experimental and control groups on the post-test

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Freedom value	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Pre-test	716.503	1	716.503	38.624	0.000
Groups	11423.457	1	11427.457	615.774	0.000
Error	1057.824	57	18.608		
Total	12763.425	59			

The results showed that there are differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-test for independence skills. The F-value was (0.615.774), which is greater than the F-value at the level of significance ($\alpha < 0.05$). Therefore, the first null hypothesis that states “there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha < 0.05$)) between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degrees of independence on the post-test due to the training program” is rejected. The alternative hypothesis that states that "there are statistically significant differences in the independence skills between the two groups according to the training program" is accepted. This means that the students who received training in independence skills outperformed their counterparts in the control group who did not receive any training.

The effectiveness of the training program on independence skills in this study is evident through the improvement in the social behavior of the members of the experimental group. This was evident from the teacher’s observations, which indicated that the interactions of students with LDs with their peers inside the

resource room and teachers improved. This result is attributed to the fact that the training program worked to create positive, active, and appropriate participation for students through direct interaction with the training learning experience through the practical performance of the skill under the supervision of the teacher.

The training program developed the students' positive participation and increased their sense of group spirit. This was evident by observing their expressions with words that indicate the spirit of teamwork, such as "we want" instead of "I want." The program also developed cooperation, respect for others, waiting for the turn and all this was evident during the program sessions. The diversity of training activities (feedback, role-playing, and reinforcement) enhanced the experimental group's mastery of learning independence skills, which helped maintain students' enthusiasm and curiosity.

As for the control group, the researcher noticed, through his knowledge of the educational conditions in their school, a scarcity of the learning aids used, which made the learning sessions boring and routine-like that reduce the student's motivation and distraction.

The researcher attributes the improvement in the independence skills of the students of the training group because the program created the appropriate psychological atmosphere in which students with LDs felt love, affection, reassurance, and freedom to express their ideas without fear. This allowed them to interact positively, build bridges of trust, cooperation, discussion and follow instructions and commitment to attend the sessions of the program, and thus led to the enhancement of the effectiveness of the training program in providing these students with the desired skills.

Results of the second question

To answer the second question, the mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each of the experimental and control groups in the post-test for independence as shown in Table (3).

Table (3)

The mean scores and standard deviations of students' scores on the post-test of independence according to group and gender

gender group	Males		Females		Group	
	Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation
Experimental	77.0666	1.486	73.002	4.262	75.032	9.563
Control	47.866	4.356	48.066	8.336	47.966	6.346
Total	62.466	9.610	60.530	6.299	61.491	7.955

It is clear from Table (3) that there are apparent differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The mean score of the experimental group was (75.032), while the mean score of the control group was (47.966). To

identify the statistical significance of these differences, given the correlation of the dimensions of the independence scale with statistical significance of ($\alpha < 0.05$), the ANCOVA analysis was used and the results were shown in Table (4).

Table (4)

The results of the ANCOVA analysis of the effect of group and gender and the interaction between them in the post-test

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Freedom value	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Pre-test	599.408	599.408	1	31.382	0.000
group	1223.768	1223.768	1	64.076	0.000
Gender	5.811	5.811	1	0.259	0.589
Gender ^X Group	3.901	3.901	1	0.186	0.668
Error	1050.485	1050.485	55		
Total	12763.259		59		

The results showed that there were differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-test. The F-value was (64.076), which is greater than the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0.05$). As for gender, no statistically significant differences appeared between males and females, as the F-value was (0.259), with a significance level (0.589). This means that there were no statistically significant differences between males and females in independence skills. Concerning the effect of group and gender, the differences did not reach the level of statistical significance, as the calculated “F” value was (0.186), and with a significance level of (0.668). This means accepting the null hypothesis that states “there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha < 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the degree of independence on the post-test attributed to the variable of group and gender and the interaction between them and rejecting the alternative hypothesis.

The researcher attributes the result to the intellectual and social changes that led to the change of the old methods of socialization based on the distinction between males and females, and the transformation of the family into balanced attention between males and females. The effectiveness of the training program could be attributed to the keenness of the researcher when preparing the training program that the models presented in the training program should be directed to both genders. Therefore, we find that the program has worked to reduce the differences between males and females in independence skills.

The results of the third question

To answer the third question, the mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each of the experimental and control groups for the pre and post-tests of independence, and the results were presented in Table (5).

Table (5)

The mean scores and standard deviations of scores on the pre-test and post-test for the two groups on the independence test

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation
experimental	49.344	5.527	78.566	4.116
control	46.638	6.638	47.066	6.536

The results contained in the previous table indicate that the mean score of the experimental group on the pre-test was (49.344), while the mean score on the post-test was (78.566). On the other hand, the mean score of the control group on the pre-test was (46.638) and (47.066) in the post-test. It is noted from the mean scores of the experimental and control groups that there are differences, and to find out these differences statistically, the ANCOVA analysis was used, and the results are presented in Table (6).

Table (6)

The results of the ANCOVA analysis of the differences between the two groups on the two pre-tests and the post-test

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Freedom value	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Pre-test	848.051	848.051	1	56.086	0.000
group	1268.087	1268.087	1	83.883	0.000
Gender	6.111	6.111	1	0.396	0.532
Gender ^x Group	4.231	4.231	1	0.271	0.605
Error	831.942	15.410	55		
Total	15775.830		59		

The results showed that there are differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-test of independence skills. The F-value was (83,883) which is greater than the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0.05$). This means rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, in the sense that the effect of the program continued after stopping the implementation of the training program a month, and in favor of the experimental group that was exposed to the independence skills training program. The mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each of the experimental and control groups for the pre and post-tests. The reason for the effectiveness of the training program may be due to the program items that are derived from the reality of the social environment in which the student lives. The program included a set of skills that the child can practice in school and at home, which led to the retention of these skills even after the completion of the training period for a month. This also indicates that the students did not learn and did not acquire the skills within the session only, but they were able to transfer the skills

outside the sessions, and this is evident from the teachers' observations of the experimental group inside the school and the classroom.

Recommendations

In light of the results of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

- Preparing training programs for students with LDs that include all different aspects of development: emotional, cognitive, social, and psychological, and not limited to the academic aspect only.

- Holding intensive and continuous training courses and educational workshops for resource room teachers and qualifying them effectively to enable them to develop independence skills for students with LDs.

- The researcher recommends that the classroom session in the resource room be a source of attraction for the student's attention and an element of suspense in

- presented.

- The importance of training resource room students with LDs on all areas of social development, and using the results of this study and similar studies in addressing aspects of social development for resource room students.

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