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## INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF POSITIVE THINKING TRAINING ON STUDENTS ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the effectiveness of positive thinking training on the academic engagement and social development of students. This study was a semi-experimental work with a pretest-posttest design and control group. The statistical population in this study consisted of all female secondary students in Hamidieh City educating in the academic year 2020-2021. The sampling method in this study was random sampling. 30 students were selected randomly and were divided into control and experimental groups (15 students per group). The data collection instrument in this study was Weitzman's Social Development Questionnaire (1990), and the Academic Engagement Questionnaire, of Frederick, Bloomfield, Paris (2006). The positive thinking training program was implemented on the experimental group for 8 sessions with 90min per session during 8 sequential weeks, and the control group received no intervention. The data analysis was done using SPSS, descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and MANCOVA. The results showed a significant difference between pre-intervention and post-intervention mean values. However, a significant difference was observed between control and experimental groups after intervention in terms of mean values ( $p < 0.01$ ). The results showed that the social development and academic engagement of students are different after teaching positive thinking in the experimental group compared to the control group. In other words, positive thinking training was effective and could enhance the academic engagement and social development of the students.

**Keywords** positive thinking training, academic engagement, social development

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### Introduction

In every society, students are spiritual and intellectual properties, and the builders of the future of the society, which take responsibilities in the future. Analysis of the factors and issues affecting the academic life and advancement of the students in the field of education can be the most underlying goals of education in every society. The majority of these goals are achieved at school. However, the situation of schools and other academic majors results in challenges, difficulties, and pressures in daily academic life (Martin and Marsh, 2009). As academic

achievement and failure can be one of the criteria of educational system efficiency, studying effective variables in academic achievement results in better understanding and prediction of effective variables in the school (Seif, 2016).

Academic engagement of the students is a significant structure for learning so that it can be regarded as an underlying learning factor (Zyngier, 2008). Academic failure refers to the energy consumed by learners to perform academic tasks, and the effectiveness resulted from that. Also, academic engagement results in effective participation in school activities, participation in classroom activities, adaptation with e school

culture, and appropriate relationship with the teachers and other students (Shaaria, Yssof, Ghazalic, et al. 2014). The Fredricks Blumenfeld, Paris Model (2004) has considered three dimensions for academic engagement: 1- behavioral (positive behaviors, doing homework, participation in the extracurricular activities, which are useful for psychosocial adaptation, and student achievement), 2- emotional (emotions, interests, student perception of school), and 3- cognitive (psychological empowerment of students for learning, and using self-regulation strategies). Academic engagement plays a key role in academic achievement, student achievement, and decrease in risky behaviors at school. This is because; academic engagement increases the commitment of students to educational goals, and their involvement in the school works. Students with academic engagement pay attention to learning issues more than others, observe the school rules more than others, avoid inappropriate behaviors, and have better performance in exams compared to others. On the contrary, lack of academic engagement results in serious consequences such as lack of achievement in the school, the tendency to deviational behaviors, and the risk of dropout (Wang, Holcombe, 2010). Academic engagement is one of the most important components of the educational process of a student's life for successful encountering of academic, professional, family, and social challenges. All youths face academic engagement to achieve the goals and desires. Engagement and relevant factors must be regarded as a part of the elements affecting the success of students.

Social development is one of the variables relevant to the academic performance of students. Social development refers to balanced series of social skills, and adaptive behaviors, which enable the person to make appropriate relationships, react positively, and avoid behaviors with negative consequences. The components of social development include skills such as cooperation, responsibility, empathy, self-control, and self-confidence (Cartelj & Millburn, Trans. Nazarinejad, 2008).

The psychologists and consultants have used various approaches and therapies to improve academic engagement and social development.

For example, they have used Snyder's Theory-based group training (Ghadampour, Radmehr, Yusefvand, 2016) to improve academic engagement. Also, they used live value training (Moghtraderi, Refahi, 2011), and problem-solving skill training (Heidari Kamrudi, Kharazmi Rahimabadi, Babapour, and Ejari, 2017) to improve social development. Positive thinking training can be one of the methods affecting the improvement of academic engagement and social development.

Quilliam has defined positive thinking as follows: Positive Thinking shows you how to transform your approach to living, so you can feel good about yourself, create worthwhile relationships, and perform successfully. Positive thinking includes overcoming the negative thoughts, changing the mental images, enhancing self-esteem, self-confidence, the realization of potential powers, and living positively (Quilliam, Trans. Barati and Sadeghi, 2016). To confirm the aforementioned issues, positive thinking interventions emphasize the improvement of individual abilities, to encounter positive skills (Stallard, 2008).

According to the mentioned characteristics to teach positive thinking skills, the approach is suitable therapy theoretically for academic engagement and social development. However, no study is conducted on the effectiveness of this approach to enhance academic engagement, and social development according to the investigations of the author. Therefore, a serious gap in the relevant literature of intervention in academic engagement and social development can be negligence of positive thinking approach to enhance academic engagement and social development. This study aims at filling some part of this gap. Hence, this study is going to answer the question: whether positive thinking training skills can enhance academic engagement and social development of the students significantly or not?

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Academic engagement**

Academic engagement is one of the most fundamental concepts in the field of training and

educating children and adolescents. Academic engagement means to have a desire for something or being interested in the affairs and aspects of a work, which is usually defined contrary to reluctance. Academic engagement as a sense of belonging to participation in classroom activities can be the most significant consequence of school, along with academic successes (Eslami et al, 2016). Academic engagement includes participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, music, theater, and group work, which is organized by the school. Also, academic engagement is participation in learning academic tasks (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004).

The structure of academic engagement refers to the behaviors associated with learning and academic achievement. This concept refers to the quality of an effort for purposeful educational activities to play a key role in the achievement of desired results directly (Safari, Jenabadi, Salmabadi, Abbasi, 2015). Academic engagement is a multidimensional structure including cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Academic engagement encompasses using cognitive and metacognitive strategies for learning. Emotional engagement includes three components including feelings, value, and emotion. Also, it encompasses an interest in the educational environment and academic works. Behavioral engagement includes active presence with enthusiasm in the academic environment (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

#### **Factors affecting academic engagement**

Factors affecting academic engagement include family factors (family structure, income, parent job, parent literacy, and migration), and school factors (student perception of teacher, environment, and culture, teacher-student, and student-student relationships) (Kord Afshari, 2012). In this field, Broner believes that the students should be aware of the interactions of learning. Also, the students are responsible for learning, and teachers are responsible for facilitating and providing learning (Jabar Yazdi, 2014). Elsewhere, Broner believes that the factor affecting academic engagement can be using creative teaching methods in the universities. According to this opinion, the traditional method can destroy creativity instead of adverting and developing that. In the student-oriented methods,

students are involved in the learning process, and the major part of education is the responsibility of the students. There is an interaction between the students and the teacher. As a result of long-term training by the new teaching methods, the added talents of the students for learning are facilitated. Hence, they can cope with the teaching methods because of the knowledge they obtain (Joice and Kalhon; Trans. Behrangi, 2019). Pesfrid (2001, quoted from Jabbari Yazdi, 2012) believes that the factor affecting academic engagement is using problem statement methods so that the students and teachers can think about the world around them and create a proper form of thinking and acting. Through this, the educational system can be reconstructed and help individuals to have a positive attitude.

#### **Social development**

Social skills are behaviors forcing the individuals to have effective interactions and to avoid undesirable responses, and express the behavioral and social health of people. These skills are originated in the social and cultural contexts and include behaviors such as taking the initiative to make new relations, asking for help and offering others to help them. The consequences of using inappropriate levels of social skills result in a lack of psychosocial health in adulthood (Asl Fattahi, Najarpour Ostadi, 2013).

Social skills must be learned, and include verbal and non-verbal behaviors coming with suitable reactions and responses, and need the right time and controlling specific behaviors. The skills are affected by the environmental factors and maximize the social empowerment of others (Harji, Sanders and Dixon, Trans. Beigi, 2018). Social skills refer to behaviors forming the foundation of successful and face-to-face communications. Also, social skills are certain and learned behaviors of individuals in their interpersonal relations to gain environmental enhancements or preserving them.

#### **The components of social skill development**

Matson et al. (1983) created a scale to measure the social skills of people in the age range of 4-18 years old. The scale contains 50 subscales in the frame of five factors:

1. The first factor: includes appropriate social skills encompassing social behaviors such

as being in visual relation with others, being polite, using the name of others, and eager to interact in a useful way

2. Second factor: improper audacity including behaviors such as telling lies, beating, criticizing others, making awkward and upsetting voices, and breaking the promises
3. Third factor: impulsivity that includes behaviors such as getting angry easily, and stubborn
4. Fourth factor: extreme self-confidence, which includes behaviors on showing off, pretending to know everything, and self-exaltation
5. Fifth factor: jealousy/isolation including loneliness and jealousy (quoted from Yusefi and Khayer, 2002)

### **Positive thinking**

The attitude of people toward life is a combination of their emotions, thoughts, and beliefs. The most fundamental step to change a negative attitude to a positive one is the identification and differentiation of emotions, thoughts, and beliefs of self.

Seligman et al. believe that an optimistic attitude helps people to be fertile, and be capable to take future responsibilities to have a happy life. However, they believe that optimism and positive thinking encompasses negative points, especially in an extreme state. When people think about something and it never happens in the future, this may cause frustration, except for the situations people are extreme optimists. They are surprised by the bad events and think that negative things are constant. What is the solution now? Seligman says: use realistic optimism. Pay attention to these principles of human life:

- People are capable to learn and be changed
- Bad situations and events will be passed and ended
- People dominate their emotional destination, meaning that they can have healthy negative feelings on the difficulties instead of unhealthy ones.
- One can achieve the desires and goals by practicing and working most of the times

- When falling in trouble, people can provide short-term and long-term entertainments for themselves

Optimism and positive thinking are similar to securing a life with life insurance or fire insurance. Although realistic optimism is obtained hardly, it is achievable. In rational-emotional behavioral therapy, it is assumed that as realistic optimism is what is called realism or watching what happens in the world, it is easy to obtain that, and it would be better than an unrealistic one. People can make choices and select realistic optimistic life, which can be achieved and be useful (Ellis, Trans. Firoozbakht, 2017).

### **Positive psychology**

Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi have defined positive psychology as: "the field of the mental level of positive psychology, it considers valuable mental experiences such as well-being, happiness, satisfaction (in the past), hope and optimism (in the future), and happiness (in the present time). At the individual level, it considers positive individual traits such as the capacity of work and love, braveness, interpersonal skills, sensitivity to aesthetics, effort, forgiveness, originality, foresight, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, it considers citizenship virtues, and the institutions conducting people toward being a better citizen, responsible, creative, altruistic, moderate, tolerant, and citizens with work ethics" (Magyar Moe, Trans. Forughi, et al. 2017). To confirm this, one can refer to the relevant studies in the field of the effect of positive psychology on some aforementioned fields. On well-being, Wong (2006) conducted a study under the title of "the relationship between positive thinking and pessimism with psychological well-being, and psychological maladaptation". The study showed that positive thinking is in positive correlation with the components of psychological well-being (life satisfaction and pleasure), and is in negative correlation with psychological maladaptation components (stress, anxiety, anger). On the contrary, pessimism was in positive correlation with the components of psychological maladaptation, and negative correlation with the components of psychological well-being.

### **The uses of positive thinking**

The constructs of positive psychology as a mediating variable are correlated to perceived health and two components of psychological well-being including life satisfaction and positive emotions (Pezent, 2011). Using the positivism approach in psychotherapy shows that the personal positive perception enhancement-based intervention could enhance the positive self-descriptions, and the clients could gain high self-confidence. The family incompatibility was significantly decreased, and the depression of clients was improved. Schueller (2012) showed that positive psychology is good means for life by emphasizing positive emotions, positive situations, and positive positions. Also, the study showed that positive psychology interventions can enhance psychological well-being. Besides, positive interventions decrease depression, increase happiness and psychological well-being by increasing positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

### **Literature review**

Kazemi, Mousavi, Rasoolzadeh, Mohammadi, and Mohammadi (2019) investigated the effect of positive thinking training on psychological hardiness and social adequacy of the students. The sample size in this study consisted of 40 students of the first grade of secondary school. Samples were selected using cluster random sampling and were classified into two groups (20 students per group). The results showed that positive thinking training could affect the psychological hardiness and social adequacy of students. Also, the changes in hardiness and social adequacy were continued in the follow-up stage.

Sadeghi and Beiranvand (2017) analyzed the effect of positive thinking skills group training on positive emotions, learning, and academic self-regulation of female students of the secondary school during the academic year 2016-2017. The statistical population consisted of 60 students (30 students in the experimental group, and 30 students in the control group). Samples were selected using stratified cluster random sampling. The results of the study showed that training positive thinking skills in the group could leave a significant effect on the enhancement of positive emotions of learning and self-regulation in the

female students of grade one secondary school in Khoramabad.

Cohen and Frederickson (2010) found that positive psychology interventions create more positive emotions and values in the real life.

### **Methodology**

This study is an applied one in terms of purpose. In terms of method, the study is a semi-experimental work with a pretest-posttest design and control group. The study was formed of two experimental and control groups. Both groups were measured two times; meaning that academic engagement and social development questionnaires were given before and after training as pretest and posttest. Then, the mean difference of pretest and posttest values of the experimental group and the mean difference of control groups (with no intervention) were compared to determine the impact of training.

The statistical population in this study consisted of all female secondary school students in grade two in Hamidieh City during the academic year of 2020-2021. The sampling method was random sampling. 30 students were selected and were randomly classified into control and experimental groups (15 students per group).

Data collection in this study was done using library, documentary, and field methods. The library method includes analysis of types of Persian and Latin books and articles in the field of the relevant literature of research variables. In the field method, the questionnaires mentioned in the section of the research instrument were used.

To perform the study, the author referred to the Department of Education of Hamidieh City, and the following steps were done after the necessary coordination:

- 1- Providing program and preparing suitable measurement and training instrument
- 2- Selecting 30 students by random sampling to appoint experimental and control groups
- 3- Appointing two experimental and control groups randomly (15 students per group)
- 4- Performing pretest on both groups
- 5- Performing training sessions of positive thinking skills for the experimental group for 8

sessions, and 90min per session in the group (control group received no intervention)

6- At the end of the sessions, positive thinking skills of the experimental group, posttest was performed on both groups one week later.

Data collection for this study was done using library and field methods. library method includes analysis of types of Persian and Latin books and articles in the field of the relevant literature of research variables. In the field method, the questionnaires mentioned in the section of the research instrument were used.

**Social Development Scale:** the scale was used to determine the social development of the adolescents. Ellis Witsman designed this scale in 1990 to determine the social development of adolescents of the age of 13-18 years old. Wittman's social development scale contains 27 items and six subscales (cooperation, mood and compatibility, respect for others, responsibility, hope, optimism, and patience). This test is a paper-and-pencil examination and should be completed within about 20-25min. The scale contains items measuring different aspects of the social development of students. The items (4, 5, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, and 26) should be scored reversely, and each item includes 3 or 4 points. The true answers would be extracted and scored using the test key. A score of 24 or higher is excellent; a score of 15-24 is good, a score of 5-14 is intermediate, and a score below 5 is weak. The social development scores of each student were collected in a column and the average was derived. The scores are totally in the range of (0-25). The content validity of this questionnaire was confirmed by the professors of Isfahan University. Fazel (2003) measured the reliability of this scale

**Table 1.** Summary of positive thinking training sessions

Session	Subject	Training content
1	Making initial relationship	Explaining the process, familiarity with the concept of positive thinking, dividing the participants into three groups (5 subjects per group), familiarity with the group and regulations, giving tasks for the next session
2	Familiarity with the way of formation of attitude	Review of the last session, emphasizing that human creates the denial and beliefs based on the formation of thought, referring to the technique of pushing Adler key and mentioning a verse of Holy Quran on aspects of positive thinking, giving task for next session
3	Positive thinking training	Review of the last session, training positive thinking by

using a retest immediately after 4 weeks. The reliability of the scale was obtained at 0.70.

**School engagement scale:** the school engagement scale was made by Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris (2006), and contains 15 items. The items measure three subscales including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement among the students. Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 are relevant to behavioral engagement; items 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are relevant to emotional engagement; and items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 are relevant to cognitive engagement. The answers of each type were scored in 5 points from 1 (never) to 5 (always). In this study, items 2, 4, and 6 are scored reversely.

**Validity and reliability:** the questionnaire was translated to Persian, and the Persian version was again translated to English. The two versions were compared, and there was no conflict. Then, for the content validity test, the questionnaire was sent to 5 professors of the department of psychology. They ranked the scales from the point not at all suitable (1) to very suitable (5). The arbitrators evaluated the scale and relevant components very suitable. Mollaei, Hejazi, Yusefi Afrashte, and Morovati (2020) reported reliability of 0.83 for this scale using Cronbach's alpha.

**Positive thinking training program:** in this study, Susan Quilliam's positive thinking protocol (2003) was used to train positive thinking skills. The skills were performed in the group by the author during 8 sessions and 90mn per session. It should be mentioned that the training program has been used in different studies, and is consistent with the Iranian population. A summary of the structure of training sessions is presented in Table 1.

		challenging negative thoughts, changing mental images, using constructive language and revising the beliefs, group conversation, giving task for next session
4	Enhancing the positive thoughts and feedbacks	Review of the last session, training positive thinking by the institutionalization of positive thinking strategies in life, positive thinking opportunities by coping with the unsolved problems, giving task for next session
5	Providing positive thinking solutions	Review of the last session, positive thinking training by learning how to stop thinking, relaxation and changing attitudes including necessity, inhibition, and defiance, giving task for next session
6	Providing practical solutions to enhance positive thinking beliefs	Review of the last session, bringing laugh in life, creating self-confidence and desirable physical training, telling jokes and enjoyable memories, giving task for next session
7	Practicing positive thinking	Review of the last session, practicing positive thinking by making positive relationship, being aware of positive points of self and others, overcoming criticism, making good relationships, taking a no-criticism attitude, giving task for the next session
8	Conclusion of sessions	Review of last sessions and getting feedback of subjects, practicing ability of trust in the capabilities of the self, appreciating the participants, performing posttest

Finally, this study used descriptive and inferential statistics for the data analysis. In the descriptive level, tables, mean values, standard deviation, and diagrams were used. As the study design is a semi-experimental design with pretest-posttest and control group, MANCOVA was used after testing the hypotheses at the inferential level.

Besides, SPSS-24 was used for the statistical data analysis.

## Results

### Description of research variables

**Table 2.** The statistical description of scores of social development and academic engagement in two measurement steps separated for experimental and control groups

Group	Social development Variable	Pretest		Posttest	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control	Cooperation	10.40	3.098	10.87	3.240
	Good mood and adaptability	8.47	2.900	8.97	2.496
	Respect for others	9.43	3.461	9.93	2.881
	Hope	11.47	2.615	11.93	2.160
	Optimism	13.27	5.837	13.87	5.290
	patience	11.87	3.623	12.53	3.357
	Overall social development score	64.90	8.385	67.50	8.290
Experimental	Cooperation	11.93	3.039	13.99	2.812
	Good mood and adaptability	8.67	3.716	11.75	4.258
	Respect for others	8.97	4.417	11.13	4.124
	Hope	11.87	2.549	13.90	3.127
	Optimism	14.80	4.902	16.33	4.390

	patience	12.33	3.177	15.33	2.998
	Overall social development score	68.57	7.475	80.89	9.275
	Academic engagement	Pretest		Posttest	
Group	Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control	Behavioral engagement	12.17	3.519	12.62	3.387
	Emotional engagement	16.11	2.596	16.93	2.865
	Cognitive engagement	14.27	3.900	14.97	3.467
	Overall academic engagement score	42.55	5.318	44.52	5.379
Experimental	Behavioral engagement	12.90	3.334	14.74	3.465
	Emotional engagement	15.53	2.560	18.13	3.270
	Cognitive engagement	14.67	4.776	17.40	4.517
	Overall academic engagement score	43.10	5.779	50.27	6.947

In Table 2, descriptive statistics relevant to mean value and standard deviation of social development and academic engagement scores are presented separated for the experimental and control groups in two pretest and posttest steps. As it was observed, mean values in the control group showed no significant difference between the pretest and posttest steps; although the experimental group showed an increase in the values in posttest compared to pretest.

**Testing research hypotheses**

- **Positive thinking training can affect the academic engagement and social development of students.**

To test the effect of positive thinking training on the academic engagement and social development

of students, MANCOVA was used. The results of this test and hypothesis test are presented here.

**Table 3.** Results of Box's Test for Equivalence of Covariance Matrices

Box's	F	Df1	Df2	Sig
1.994	0.613	3	141120	0.606

According to Table 3, the significance level of Box's test was equal to 0.606. As the value is higher than the sig level (0.05) required to reject the null hypothesis (H0), the H0 based on the equivalence of covariance matrix has been confirmed.

**Table 4.** Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to test the normality of score distribution

Variable	Pretest		Posttest	
	Z K-S	Sig	Z K-S	Sig
Academic engagement	0.119	0.742	0.166	0.344
Social development	0.118	0.752	0.121	0.723

In Table 4, results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test are presented to test the normality of distribution of pretest and posttest values. According to the results in the table, the

significance level of the statistics measured for all variables is higher than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis of normality of the distribution of values has been confirmed.

**Table 5.** Results of Levene test to test homogeneity of variances

Variable	F	Df1	Df2	Sig
Academic engagement	2.581	1	28	0.119

Social development	1.151	1	28	0.292
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According to Table 5, the results of the Levene test are not significant in both variables. Hence,

the H0 based on homogeneity of variances has been confirmed.

**Table 6.** Results of MANCOVA to compare the academic engagement and social development between experimental and control groups

Effect	Tests	Values	F	Effect df	Error df	Sig	Effect size
Group	Pillai effect	0.592	18.102	2	25	0.001	0.592
	Wilk's Lambda	0.408	18.102	2	25	0.001	0.592
	Hoteling effect	1.448	18.102	2	25	0.001	0.592
	Largest root	1.448	18.102	2	25	0.001	0.592

The sig level for all statistical tests including Pillai's effect, Wilk's Lambda, Hoteling (T2), and the largest root is lower than 0.01 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, the H0 is rejected, and it could be found that there is a significant difference between academic engagement and social development in two control and experimental groups.

Accordingly, it could be found that positive thinking training has affected the academic engagement and social development of students. To measure the difference between experimental and control groups in terms of each variable, the effect test is used, and the results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** The test of effect between participants to compare academic engagement and social development between experimental and control groups

Variable	Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig	Effect size
Academic engagement	Intergroup	200.059	1	200.059	16.362	0.001	0.386
	Intragroup	317.911	26	12.227			
Social development	Intergroup	686.333	1	686.333	32.202	0.001	0.553
		554.140	26	21.313			

In Table 7, the inter-participant effect test is presented to compared academic engagement and social development between experimental and control groups in the post-test. According to the results in Table 7, the F value for all variables is significant at the Alpha level of 0.01 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H0 has been rejected, and the H1 (alternative hypothesis) has been confirmed. As the mean values of the experimental in posttest are higher than values of the control group, it could be found that positive thinking training has been effective, and has increased academic engagement, and social development of the students.

### Conclusion

Attentiveness to factors affecting academic performance has gained the attention of

educational experts and the higher education system for many years. As students as the fundamental element of the educational system play a key role in achievement to goals of the educational system, attentiveness to this class in terms of training results in fertility and prosperity of the educational system. In the present study, the effect of positive thinking training s measured on the academic engagement and social development of students. The results showed that positive thinking training can affect the academic engagement and social development of students. The results of MANCOVA showed that two control and experimental groups are different in terms of academic engagement and social development in the posttest ( $p < 0.01$ ). According to the high mean values of the experimental group in the posttest compared to the control group, it could be found that positive thinking training has been effective, and has enhanced academic

engagement and social development of the students.

The results obtained for the effectiveness of positive thinking training on academic engagement were consistent with the findings of Sadeghi, Abbasi Beiranvand (2019), Babaei Abrak, and Safarzadeh (2018), Elmi Manesh, and Fazelipour (2018).

Consistent with findings of Sadeghi, Abbasi, and Beiranvand (2019) under the title of "effectiveness of positive thinking training based on Quilliam's package on the academic optimism and academic engagement of female students", it was found that positive thinking skill training could increase academic optimism and engagement significantly. Findings of Babaei and Safarzadeh (2018) under the title of "effectiveness of positive thinking training on academic vitality, engagement and achievement orientation in female students with depression syndrome" showed that intervention of positive thinking skill training in the female students with depression syndrome could improve academic functions (academic vitality, engagement, and skills goals, performance-oriented and performance-avoidance goals). In a study on the effectiveness of positive thinking intervention on the academic vitality of the Payam-e Noor students, it was found that positive thinking intervention could affect the academic vitality of the students significantly (Elmi Manesh and Fazelipour, 2018).

To explain the results of the effect of positive thinking on academic engagement, it could be mentioned that academic engagement that is correlated to vitality, and enthusiasm for the classroom was enhanced using the positive thinking skill. Positive thinking skill training includes skills such as how to accept and cope with weaknesses, identification of thoughts, and adaptability with stressful conditions. Hence, it can enhance positive academic emotions such as academic engagement (Babaei Abrak and Safarzadeh, 2018). Considering the positive aspects and features of behaviors is vital instead of emphasizing the weaknesses and negative aspects of behavior. People feel more valuable when they have a positive evaluation of the life of self and others. To have such an attitude toward life, people should be aware of their positive

traits, aesthetics, abilities, and special talents, respect them and be satisfied with them (Maghsoodlou and Amoopour, 2017). Besides, positive thinking skill training helps individuals to recognize themselves and the surrounding area in a better way. In the field of positive thinking and optimism training, the students are encouraged to recognize their positive and good experiences, recognize their role in the enhancement of self-respect, and gain the ability to recognize positive aspects of others. Also, they learn to have an active position in the world and form their life in person. They learn not to be inactive and accept what happens. Positive thinking helps individuals be more successful in their job and education compared to what others think about them. Hence, the aforementioned factors can enhance the academic engagement of students.

The result on the effectiveness of positive thinking training on social development was consistent with the findings of Ali Mohammadi and Shafizadeh (2015), Jafari Bagh Kheirati, Ghahremani, Keshavarzi, and Kaveh (2014), and O'Connell, O'Shea, and Gallagher (2015).

Consistent with findings of Ali Mohammadi and Shafizadeh (2015) on the relationship of positive thinking with social skills in grade two secondary school students of Semnan, it was found that students with high social skills had a higher level of positive thinking, and those with low social skills had a lower level of positive thinking. Jafari Bagh Kheirati, Ghahremani, Keshavarzi, and Kaveh (2014) found that positive thinking training using social adequacy factors could affect various aspects of life, and can enhance their interpersonal and social relationships. The findings of O'Connell, O'Shea, Gallagher showed that positive thinking interventions could enhance social relations and life satisfaction.

To explain the effectiveness of positive thinking on social development, it could be mentioned that positive psychology has affected the improvement of self-esteem, and has enhanced positive emotions and thinking by emphasizing capabilities and development of talents. Increased happiness and decreased inefficient attitudes are factors showing the mental health of individuals. As positive psychology has emphasized the increase in happiness and vitality, correcting thoughts,

using strengths and capabilities, positive thinking practices and courses have enhanced psychological modes (such as positive thinking), and emphasized the capabilities and growing them (Farnam and Madadzadeh, 2017). Hence, all of the abovementioned factors can enhance the development of social skills.

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