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Training Program with Positive Psychology Techniques for Underachieving University Students' Learned Helplessness and Psychological Flow

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of a positive thinking training program in reducing learned helplessness and improving the psychological flow of academically underachieving university students. The experimental research involved an 11-member training group, with learned helplessness and psychological flow scales used to assess the participants. Wilcoxon tests were used for data analysis. The results showed that the training program had a significant positive effect on both learned helplessness and psychological flow immediately after the training. Additionally, the positive effects were sustained a month later during the follow-up period. The study provides valuable insights for stakeholders and researchers.

Keywords: Learned Helplessness, Psychological Flow, Positive Psychology, Underachieving Students.

1. Introduction

Academic underachievement is one of the difficulties that encounter the educational system all over the world. It is a multidimensional and global phenomenon. It has implications beyond the academic aspects to the psychological, social, and emotional aspects. Underachieving students are those whose achievement level is lower than that of their peers of the same age or grade level and their achievement is lower than their intelligence level [1].

Academic underachievement lowers students' psychological hardiness level, self-confidence, and self-esteem. It also increases their feelings of isolation, psychological stress, feeling of inferiority, withdrawal from situations, academic reluctance, and irrational thoughts [2,3,4]. Many underachieving students suffer from symptoms of learned helplessness that push them to drop out of the educational process as a result of their feeling of inferiority and low self-confidence [3,5,6,7]. Therefore, reducing the level of learned helplessness has many positive effects related to their psychological and academic level [8].

Learned helplessness reflects a mental state in which the learner bears unpleasant or annoying stimuli that result in his inability to perform the task even if the appropriate conditions are available because the learner believes that he cannot control his environment or the situations he experiences [9]. It comprises cognitive difficulties that lead to the learner's belief that certain behaviors influence what is happening [10]. It negatively affects the learner's personality. It may cause various disorders as motivation disorders, cognitive disorders, behavioral disorders, and emotional disorders [11, 12].

Learned helpless students are characterized by negativity, withdrawal, procrastination, frustration,

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low self-esteem, difficulty in solving problems, low self-confidence, low self-efficacy, and underperformance. They have excessive self-blame after every failure, belief in luck, chance, and external factors, excessive dependence on others, goal-oriented for performance not for learning, persistent fear of failure and hopelessness, poor achievement motivation, exaggeration of perfectionism and positivity with repeated failures, rapid withdrawal from difficult situations, exaggeration of negatives and positives, loss of ambition, and tendency to avoid processing information to anticipate difficulty and failure [11,13,14,15,16].

Psychological flow is one of the psychological concepts with positive connotations that underachieving students are in need. It is a satisfying experience with a high level of focus that reaches the level of complete immersion in the activity with a loss of self-awareness to attain peak performance (optimal experience). In addition, it distorts the perception of time and the sense of elevated pleasure despite facing difficult challenges [17]. It is an internal psychological state that makes a person feel oneness with what he is doing, fully focused on what he is doing and rushing lively toward activities with a general sense of success in dealing with these activities [18].

Psychological flow allows learners to postpone their excessive preoccupation with negative feelings and sources of threat and makes them more able to establish a flexible and clear system that pushes them to develop themselves as individuals [19]. Psychological flow affects students' personality as it enhances their self-reliance, perseverance, self-efficacy, level of ambition, responsibility, self-confidence, motivation for achievement, creativity, love, psychological flexibility (happiness), positive thinking, the five major factors of personality, life satisfaction, and social relationships with others. Besides, it is negatively related to their anxiety level, depression, frustration, despair, boredom, and indifference [17- 18 - 20 - 21 - 22 - 23]

Working with underachieving students requires presenting creative solutions to their problems through providing counseling services that rehabilitate and help them to overcome their psychological, emotional, and academic effects, and achieve psychological and academic adjustment. Concerning this, positive psychology utilizes new techniques that contribute to solving psychological, academic, and emotional problems, such as learned helplessness of underachieving students as instilling hope and developing optimism, self-efficacy, love and work, daring and courage, interpersonal skills, planning and time management, perseverance and tolerance, overcoming failure experiences, high talent, wisdom and building barrier forces, and these methods and others. These techniques act as a barrier against the individual's exposure to psychological and mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, and psychological stress [20 - 24 - 25 - 26 - 27 - 28 - 29 -30].

Exploring positive psychology techniques is a recent and noteworthy factor that has not been sufficiently examined in Arab contexts to address the academic, psychological, and emotional difficulties faced by underachieving students. Despite the available theories and research, it is evident that positive thinking methods play a crucial role in these students. Moreover, there is a lack of studies directly investigating the influence of positive psychology training on diminishing learned helplessness or enhancing psychological flow among underachieving university students.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the efficacy of a training program that utilizes positive thinking techniques in reducing learned helplessness and improving the psychological flow of university students who are underachieving academically. Additionally, it aims to assess the sustainability of the program's effectiveness during a follow-up period. Based on this objective, the research problem is framed by the following questions:

1. What is the effectiveness of the training program in reducing learned helplessness and its components among underachieving university students?

2. Does the effectiveness of the training program continue to eliminate learned helplessness and its components among underachieving university students after the follow-up period?

3. What is the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing psychological flow among underachieving university students?

4. Does the effectiveness of the training program continue to enhance psychological flow among underachieving university students after the follow-up period?

1.1 The Aims of the Study

This study aimed at the following:

1. Identifying the effectiveness of the suggested training program in reducing learned helplessness and its components among underachieving university students.

2. Identifying the continuity of the effectiveness of the training program in reducing learned helplessness and its components among underachieving university students.

3. Identifying the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing psychological flow among underachieving university students.

4. Identifying the effectiveness continuity of the training program in enhancing the psychological flow among underachieving university students after the follow-up period.

1.2 The Significance of the Study

1.2.1. The theoretical significance of the current study lies in the importance of current research variables for underachieving university students as reducing the level of learned helplessness contributes to enhancing self-confidence, taking responsibility, self-esteem, and developing motivation for academic achievement. Besides, the psychological flow also plays a significant role in the quality of the educational process, by developing the student's sense of pleasure and happiness, integration into the learning process, complete focus, clarity of goals, and the formation of positive emotions full of energy and vitality, all of which work to divert the student's attention towards the academic tasks assigned to him. The research may open the way for more studies that deal with learned helplessness and psychological flow with other categories, or through other psychological variables that may contribute to reducing the level of learned helplessness and developing psychological flow.

1.2.2. The Practical Significance lies in adding measures of positive psychology techniques and acquired helplessness for the psychological and educational heritage and those interested in the educational process. Besides, the results of the research can be used in building programs, developing plans, and directing efforts to the right path to confront the problems of underachieving university students. In addition, the current training program may help officials in the field of academic and psychological counseling in the various stages of education to address learned helplessness and develop the psychological flow of this category of students. The research may also direct those responsible for planning and preparing curricula at the university to the significance of including the techniques of positive psychology and integrating them into the teaching of courses, through training faculty members on this integration in workshops to develop the techniques of positive psychology among their students, especially the underachieving students.

1.3 Review of the Literature and related studies

1.3.1   Positive Psychology

Positive psychology advocates that an individual has strengths and weaknesses and focuses on his

strengths and positive traits to immunize him from disorders and achieve adjustment and happiness. Contemporary positive psychologists emphasize that developing positive emotions and building an effective successful personality can eliminate psychological suffering and mental illness through direct and indirect methods [31].

Positive psychology is defined as analyzing and studying the positive traits and human virtues such as optimism, contentment, gratitude, and creativity, and enhancing the individual's happiness in his practices, activities, and affairs of his daily life to improve his mental and physical health, making him an adjusted, productive and effective individual in his society [32]. Besides, it refers to the study of human strengths and everything that would prevent him from falling into the clutches of psychological and behavioral disorders, exploring all that makes human life worth living, and working to build positive traits that help individuals' endurance and benefit from them in health, relationships, and work [33]. The American Psychological Association defines it as the field of psychological theories and research focused on psychological experiences, individual traits, or aspects of moral strength, and the social institutions that make life worth living [34]. Positive psychology is a branch of scientific inquiry that focuses on the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and positive institutions. Its purpose is to understand the factors that contribute to individuals' well-being, happiness, and overall human flourishing. [20].

1.3.1.1. Positive psychology techniques

Positive psychology techniques training or positive psychological training is an applied positive psychological approach that focuses on solutions that aim to facilitate goal achievement, well-being, and positive change in different areas of life [35]. It utilizes an individual's unique strengths to facilitate personal growth and development [36].

Several studies approved the effectiveness of using positive psychology techniques in reducing and treating psychological and emotional disorders such as depression[37 - 38], future anxiety [39], and developing some positive variables such as happiness and life satisfaction [40 - 41], well-being [29-42], academic adjustment [43], Self-concept [24], happiness and self-orientation [44], psychological hardiness [25], self-efficacy and life skills [26].

According to theoretical frameworks, the most prominent of these techniques that are suitable for underachieving university students are:

- *Optimism*: How the individual interprets his success or failure [45]. In the current research, it is the positive expectation of the individual for good things to happen in his life, even in difficult circumstances and stressful situations.

- *Hope*: Hopefulness and trustfully expect that a wish will come true [39]. In the current research, it is an emotional feeling and cognitive preparation for the individual in which he hopes for positive results that contribute to achieving his ambitions, desires, and goals, even if they are difficult to achieve.

- *Happiness*: A relatively stable psychological state that includes positive sentiment, absence of negative sentiment, and life satisfaction [46]. In the current research, it is the individual's positive feelings and the state of the general and deep sense of satisfaction and contentment.

- *Self-efficacy:* An individual's belief in their capabilities to effectively control and manage events or situations, as well as their belief in their ability to perform well in specific tasks or activities. It is a psychological construct that plays a significant role in motivation, behavior, and achievement. Self-efficacy influences how individuals set goals, approach challenges, persevere in the face of obstacles, and ultimately, achieve desired outcomes [47]. In the current research, it is the individual's belief in his abilities to carry out tasks successfully despite frustrating

situations.

- *Self-awareness*: Accurate expression of thoughts, feelings, and emotions associated with an event as it was perceived at the time of its occurrence, as well as accurate evaluation of it [48]. The current research is paying attention to the way we think, feel, and act accordingly.

- *Positive thinking*: Develop the strengths in the individual's thinking and behavior, and help the individual discover the positive aspects that achieve a lot of success, excellence, personal happiness, and self-satisfaction [49]. In the current research, it is a mental process in which good and satisfactory results are expected, and the lack of frustration when plans do not go as expected.

- *Self-motivation*: The internal desire that directs the activity of the student to exert more effort and perseverance in performing and enjoying work, and to overcome difficulties efficiently without regard to reward [50]. In the current research, it is an inner strength of the student that contributes to moving his behavior and directing it, to achieve an important goal for him, whether moral or material.

- *Positive self-talk*: A self-directed speech that helps in carrying out tasks based on accuracy, increasing focus of attention on relevant components, increasing effort, enhancing self-confidence, and creating a positive mood [51]. In the current research, it is the individual's inner voice, which is a continuous internal verbal conversation of thoughts that come to mind in a state of consciousness, especially in the process of planning, problem-solving, and self-reflection.

1.3.2   Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness is a type of learner giving up in response to many uncontrollable pressures. It reflects the response that follows the belief that what can be done will not bring the desired result [10]. It is giving in to frequent obstacles facing the individual and having no attempt at change. It is related to the individual's conviction that he is unable to control the course of things, due to his low self-efficacy [52]. Learned helplessness denotes a state of mind in which the learner has to endure annoying or unpleasant stimuli, which results in his inability or desire to perform the task, even if the appropriate conditions are available to do so because the learner believes that he cannot control his environment or the situations he is going through [9]. Besides, it is a psychological condition characterized by internal attribution to failure experiences and external attribution to success experiences, the individual's lack of confidence in his abilities and aptitudes, bias in the interpretation of events, and a negative diagnosis of success [13].

High learned helplessness students are characterized by passivity, withdrawal, procrastination, frustration, low self-esteem, difficulty solving problems, low self-confidence, low self-efficacy, under-performance, excessive self-blame after each failure, and belief in luck, chance, and external factors. They have excessive reliance on others, persistent fear of failure and hopelessness, low achievement motivation, exaggeration of perfectionism and positivity with repeated failures, rapid withdrawal from difficult situations, and the tendency to avoid processing information to anticipate difficulty and failure [14 - 15 - 16- 53].

 Learned helplessness can be diagnosed in academic situations through the following behaviors:

- *Selective vision*: The learner's awareness of negative events separates from their general context through exaggeration and underestimation as he exaggerates situations as a result of their generalization in other situations and turns a blind eye to positive matters in the situation (underestimation).

- *Anticipating failure:* The learner's development of bad odds of events that lie in the pessimistic explanatory view.

- *Self-blame*: The learner's realizing that his personality is the cause of his failures and the constant feeling of ineffectiveness in controlling events in the future.

- *Negative image in the eyes of others*: The learner has an inferior view of himself and a feeling that others do not accept him and do not trust his competence.

- *Personal perfection*: The learner sets high standards for judging his behavior. He considers the desire to achieve perfection as an irrational idea due to the difficulty of achieving it.

- *Learned passivity*: The learner's preference not to take any positive or negative attitude and to give up when facing challenges.

- *The strategy of luck, fate, and destiny*: The learner attributes the failure to external factors due to his lack of control over events. He believes that the real factors of failure in his view are external factors such as luck, fate, and destiny.

- *Learned laziness*: The learner feels helpless as a result of the actions not being linked to the results. He shows some signs of laziness, lack of perseverance, patience, and struggle.

- *Dependency*: The learner's belief that his strength comes with the strong, and dependence on others to achieve his goals and objectives, as a result of a lack of a sense of responsibility and low self-esteem.

- *Withdrawal*: The learner's preference to opt out because of his belief that his effort does not affect the result and his sense of his inability to carry out tasks [14 -15- 52 - 54].

1.3.3   Psychological flow

The concept of psychological flow is among the most significant concepts associated with positive psychology. It is a subjective experience that accompanies the performance of the individual in a situation in which his skills are balanced with the challenges he faces with the ability to control the course of things accompanied by a feeling of happiness and pleasure. Psychological flow is an emotional state that happens when a person is fully engaged in performance in a situation where the interpersonal skills are in balance with the demands of the challenge and in which the individual experiences a state of altered awareness of performance and immersion in activity [55]. It is a positive psychological experience and an optimal psychological state that occurs when the individual is engaged in the task, accompanied by peak activity and achievement of advanced levels of performance [56]. Besides, Banhan [57] defines it as a state of optimal experience that occurs when an individual performs a certain job or skill and forgets about himself and time with a feeling of pleasure and happiness, to eventually reach unique human creativity.

According to Csikszentmilhalyi& Csikszentmilhalyi [17] and Tenenbaum et al. [58], psychological flow is a multidimensional concept of nine components:

- The balance between challenge and skill: A sense of balance between activity requirements and interpersonal skills.

- Engagement between action and awareness (psychological state): the feeling that performance is automatic and spontaneous.

- Perceived Goals: A sense of confidence and certainty in what he is doing.

- Unambiguous Feedback: Prior knowledge of the performance direction (where the performance is headed) and a sense of what he is doing.

- Complete focus on the task or work: The feeling of being completely absorbed in the task.

- A sense of control: Adjust and control all performance requirements without effort.

- Lack of awareness or sense of self: fading of self-interest during the performance.

- Sense of either the speed of time or its slow passage: The feeling that time is moving irregularly, whether towards speed or slowness, and this during the performance of the task.

- Auto telic experience: The sense of internal pleasure during the performance, which indicates that the experience of internal reward (doing an action or performing an activity and accomplishing the task is the goal in itself without waiting for a reward from the outside).

1.3.3.1 Applications of the principles of psychological flow in the educational field

There are various applications of the principles of psychological flow in the educational field. To ensure the occurrence of psychological flow in the educational field, these conditions must be available:

- The design of the instructional learning task: Through defining clear tasks that stimulate the learner's interests and are achievable and setting clear learning objectives that require a balance between the task challenges and the learners' skills to motivate students to learn.

- Learning environment: to achieve flow and peak performance, the learner needs to focus on what he is doing until he loses his sense of time, this requires a degree of independence from the teacher and colleagues and provides an environment that limits external interference and stimuli.

- Performing the educational task: Learners need to feel that the task is at hand, and they need to have a sense of self-adjustment of the situation during the activity. The teacher should experience the flow in the classroom with his students while he is doing the teaching task [56-59 - 60].

1.3.4 Underachieving students

Academic underachievement is a multi-component phenomenon. It has different effects that go beyond the academic aspects to the psychological, social, and emotional aspects and leave its effects on the student's personality. It is a state of delay or deficiency in achievement due to physical, mental, emotional, or social factors so that the student's achievement rate drops below the normal level or has low grades in general achievement tests [61]. The underachieving student is a student who fails in one or more of the courses scheduled for him during the academic year [62]. Besides, they are students whose level of achievement is lower than the peers of their age or the level of different academic teams, and their level of intelligence is lower than their intelligence [1].

Abo Salem [61] indicated that there are multiple forms of academic underachievement as general academic underachievement, special underachievement, chronic underachievement, temporary underachievement, apparent underachievement, non-functional underachievement, and functional underachievement. The current research is concerned with general and special underachievement, which is the decrease in academic achievement in all subjects or some of them, and university students, are students who have failed in one or more courses. Hence, the following criteria are utilized to diagnose them: they are transferred to the next academic level with sources they were previously unable to obtain in previous levels, they have a lower overall academic average than the average of their peers, and they meet the personality traits of underachieving students.

1.3.4.1 Characteristics of underachieving students

According to the theoretical literature [1- 61- 63- 64], underachieving students are characterized by:

- Mental and cognitive characteristics: The underachieving learner is slower than his colleagues in writing, cannot focus while reading, asks to repeat the question more than once and reinterpret it, has weak expressive ability and analysis of educational tasks, cannot connect ideas, and is slow in answering questions. His intelligence rates range between (70-90) and have a poor ability to remember, infer, describe things, discriminate, analyze, and think logically.

- Psychological and emotional characteristics: The underachieving learner is riotous, tends to be shy, moody, sensitive, hyperactive, finds it difficult to face daily problems, does not trust others, observes rules of order, uses inappropriate language, is incompatible with others, has low self-confidence and social skills. He is low, feels frustrated in school situations, depressed, and sad. He suffers from boredom, hates some of his teachers, takes a lot of permission in class, is defiant and stubborn, begins to attack others, causes chaos in the classroom, slanders a lot about others, and tries to cheat in exams.

- Physical characteristics: He is fat than those of his age, suffers from weak eyesight and hearing, frequent speech and breathing defects, frequent gum and dental diseases, fatigue and stress, dizziness, headache and malnutrition, sensory disturbance, and anemia, and is less active and energetic.

- Motivational characteristics: Indifference to study, dislike of school, lack of interest in remembering lessons, indifference, slackness, daydreaming, and reliance on others to solve homework.

2. Study Methodology and Procedure

2.1 Research Model

To assess the effectiveness of a training program that utilizes positive thinking techniques in reducing learned helplessness and enhancing psychological flow among academically underachieving university students, an experimental research approach using a one-group design with pre- and post-measurements was employed. The participants in the experimental group were administered research tools as a pre-measurement, post-measurement, and follow-up measurement.

This research design allowed for the examination of the impact of the training program on the dependent variable, which is the use of positive thinking techniques. The independent variables, on the other hand, were the decrease in learned helplessness and the enhancement of psychological flow. By conducting pre-measurements before the training program, post-measurements immediately after the program, and follow-up measurements at a later time, the researchers aimed to determine the immediate effectiveness of the program as well as its long-term effects.

2.2 Participants

The research population comprised (45) underachieving students at the seventh level in the College of Arts and Sciences (age mean=23.23, SD= ±1.78) to verify the research tool's psychometric properties, while the basic research sample (the experimental group) consisted of (11) underachieving students (age mean= 23.13, SD= ±1.78). They were selected purposefully. The experimental group was not exposed to any similar programs or treatments to ensure that there were no intervening effects. The researcher was the only trainer for the proposed program.

2.3 Study Tools

2.3.1 Positive Psychology Techniques Scale

The researcher developed a positive psychology scale specifically for this study. The selection of

positive psychology techniques was based on the students' characteristics and psychological needs, which were identified through interviews and observations. The scale consisted of 40 items, which were divided into eight techniques: optimism, hope, happiness, self-efficacy, self-awareness, positive learning, self-motivation, and positive self-talk.

Each item on the scale required participants to select from five response alternatives, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." A higher degree of agreement indicated a higher level of engagement in practicing positive psychology techniques. It's worth noting that all items on the scale were positive statements, except for items 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, and 33, which were negative statements. The concurrent validity through an external criterion (positive psychology thinking scale of Ibrahim, 2008) was utilized. The correlation coefficient was calculated between the two scales (0.849), which was a significant value at the 0.01 level, indicating the scale validity.

In addition, the discriminatory validity through the peripheral comparison was calculated, where the external criterion of Ibrahim's positive psychology technique scale [49] was applied to determine the highest and lowest 27% on the external criterion. Then, the current research scale of the positive thinking technique was applied to the highest 27% and the lowest 27% of the pilot study group (27%*45) and they were 12 students. The Mann-Whitney test was calculated for the significance of the differences between the score ranks of the two groups. The calculated U was (20), which was significant at (0.05), confirming the scale discriminatory validity.

To assess the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated, resulting in a range of 0.781 to 0.781. Additionally, the split-half equation yielded a value of 0.877. These reliability coefficients indicate that both the overall scale and its dimensions demonstrate good internal consistency and are considered reliable. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is generally considered acceptable for research purposes, as it indicates a strong degree of internal consistency among the items within the scale. In this case, with coefficients ranging from 0.781 to 0.781, the scale demonstrates good internal consistency. Similarly, the split-half equation result of 0.877 further supports the reliability of the scale. Overall, these findings indicate that the developed scale and its dimensions have a high degree of internal consistency, suggesting that the scale reliably measures the intended constructs.

2.3.2   *Learned Helplessness Scale*

The researcher developed a learned helplessness scale specifically designed to measure the level of learned helplessness among underachieving university students. The scale comprised 20 items, which were divided into four components: anticipating failure, frustration and self-blame, lack of self-motivation, and negativity. Participants were required to select from five response alternatives, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." A higher degree of agreement with the items indicated a higher level of learned helplessness among the students. It's important to note that all items on the scale were negative in nature. The scale scores ranged between 20 and 100 degrees, reflecting the levels of learned helplessness experienced by the participants. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of learned helplessness among the underachieving university students.

The concurrent validity through an external criterion (learned helplessness scale of Saleh & Zaglol [65] was utilized. The correlation coefficient was calculated between the two scales (0.793), which was a significant value at the 0.01 level, indicating the scale validity.

Besides, the discriminatory validity through the peripheral comparison was calculated, where the external criterion of the learned helplessness scale of Saleh & Zaglol [65] was applied to determine the highest and lowest 27% on the external criterion. Then, the current research scale of the positive thinking technique was applied to the highest 27% and the lowest 27% of the pilot study group. The

Mann-Whitney test was calculated for the significance of the differences between the score ranks of the two groups. The calculated U was (21.500), which was significant at (0.05), confirming the scale discriminatory validity.

To decide the scale's internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated that ranging from (0.816- 0.855) and the split half equation (=0.824), where the value of the reliability coefficients of the scale and its dimensions were greater than 0.7. This means that the scale in general has acceptable internal consistency and is reliable.

2.3.3   The Psychological Flow Scale

The psychological flow scale developed by Jackson & Marsh [55] and modified in 2006 was utilized as it is a well-documented scale that suits the research objectives and sample. The scale consisted of (36) items distributed into nine components (balance between challenge and skill, integration between action and awareness (the psychological state), clearly identifiable goals, unambiguous feedback, a complete focus on the task or work, a sense of control, Lack of awareness or sense of self, feeling either rapidly over time or slowly over time, and self-enjoyment) [17]. All the scale statements were positive. Participants select from five alternatives ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The high degree indicated the high level of students' psychological flow. The scale scores ranged between (36-180) degrees.

In addition to the well-documented evidence of the scale validity and reliability, concurrent validity through an external criterion (the psychological flow scale of Al-Mousawi and Shutb [21] was utilized. The correlation coefficient was calculated between the two scales (0.826), which was a significant value at the 0.01 level, indicating the scale validity. Besides, the scale correlation coefficients were calculated and ranged from (0.709 – 0.866), which was a significant value at the 0.01 level, indicating the internal consistency of the items with their components, and the components with the total score of the psychological flow scale.

To determine the scale's internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated that ranging from (0.845- 0.889) and the Guttmann split half equation (=0.812), where the value of the reliability coefficients of the scale and its dimensions were greater than 0.7. This means that the scale in general has good internal consistency and is reliable.

2.4 The Training Program in Positive Psychology Techniques

The program is connected with the underachieving students' characteristics and attitudes. Each session concentrates on one positive psychology technique to familiarize and train the participants on each technique. The program included a cognitive part, a training part, and a practical part through providing information on the techniques of positive psychology, training the participants on these techniques during sessions, and then practicing them in actual situations. The program's general objective is to develop positive psychology techniques among underachieving university students. The sub-objectives were defined in light of these techniques.

2.4.1   The Program General Objective

The general objective of the current program is to enhance positive psychology techniques among academically underachieving university students. The program's specific objectives have been determined based on the principles of positive psychology as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: The Training Program Frame work

Session N.	Session Title	Objectives	Techniques	Time Duration

1	Introduction and Familiarization	Introduction and Familiarization between the Researcher and Trainees, Preliminary Application of Research Tools.	Introduction Cards - Introduce your colleague	60 m
2	Introduction to the Training Program	Identify the nature of the work, program objectives, and implementation plan.	Lecture, dialogue and discussion, collaborative learning, and brainstorming	60 m
3	Positive psychology techniques, their significance, and models	Identifying the concept of positive psychology - deducing positive psychology techniques from examples - providing examples for each technique from reality and life circumstances.	Cooperative learning, imagination, ideals style. What do you do in the following situations?	60 m
4	Techniques of positive psychology in the Islamic heritage	Inferring the techniques of positive psychology from the Quranic texts, the Sunnah, and the stories of the righteous predecessors - Employing the techniques of positive psychology in simulated situations.	Lecture, dialogue and discussion, cooperative learning, ideals method. What do you do in the following situations?	60 m
5	optimism	Understanding the concept of optimism - Employing the optimism strategy in stressful situations.	Cooperative Learning, Imagination, Ideals Method What would you do in the following situations?	60 m
6	Instilling Hope	Recognizing the strategy of instilling hope Employing the strategy of instilling hope in difficult situations	Cooperative Learning, Imagination, Idealistic Style, What would you do in the following situations?	60 m
7	Happiness	Recognizing the strategy of enhancing the feeling of happiness - Employing the strategy of feeling happy in stressful situations	Style: think-pair-share, imagination, ideals style, what would you do in the following situations?	60 m
8	Self-Efficacy	Understanding the concept of self-efficacy Employing self-efficacy beliefs in academic tasks	Direct and Symbolic Modeling, Story, Imagination: The Positives Exercise (The Positives Notebook)	60 m

9	Think Positively	Identifying the concept of positive thinking Employing positive thinking skills in academic situations	Cooperative Learning, Story, Imagination, Individual and Group Exercises: The Positives Exercise (The Positives Notebook)	60 m
10	Motivate Your Self	Recognizing the concept of self-motivation, employing ways to develop self-motivation through situations.	Story, Imagination, Individual and Group Exercises: The Positives Exercise (The Positives Notebook)	60 m
11	Overcoming Failure Experiences	Identifying methods of overcoming failure experiences, employing methods of overcoming failure through situations.	Think-pair-share, direct and symbolic modeling, role-playing, story, imagination, ideals style	60 m
12	The Flow	Identifying the concept of flow, employing the skills of accessing the state of psychological flow, and practicing the strategy of self-reflection.	Think-pair-share, direct and symbolic modeling, role-playing, story, imagination, ideals style	60 m
13	Set Your Objectives and Plan It Well	Identifying goal-setting skills, identifying good planning skills, employing goal-setting skills in the student's academic life, and employing good planning in performing difficult academic tasks.	Role play, story, imagination, ideals method, high-value method, individual and group exercises: What do you do in the following situations?	60 m
14	Effective Time Management Skills	Identifying time management skills, employing the time management skill in the student's academic life.	Dialogue and discussion, cooperative learning, role-playing, story, imagination, ideals style,	60 m
15	Know Your Strengths (Self-Awareness)	To identify the concept of self-awareness, for the student to discover his strengths, to employ the strengths in academic life through situations.	Role play, story, imagination, ideals style, past change style, redefinition style.	60 m
16	Positive Self-Talk	Identifying positive self-talk skills, employing positive self-talk skills.	Brainstorming, method: think-pair-share, role-playing, imagination, ideals method.	60 m

| 17-18 | Post-application and follow-up application of the research tools one month after the end of the training program |

2.4.2   The program contents.

The program included topics and skills necessary for underachieving students. The content was selected according to the results of the pilot study, where the students' opinions regarding the most prominent academic, psychological, and social problems they encounter and in which they feel dissatisfied with their reactions were surveyed.

2.4.3   The program training techniques and methods

The program utilized the following training techniques: lecture, dialogue, and discussion, collaborative learning, brainstorming, think-pair, share style, direct and symbolic modeling, role-playing, story, imagination, ideal style, changing the past style, other person styles, redefining style, high-value style, alternative style, individual and group exercises, what do you do in the following situations?

2.4.4   The program tile and the number of sessions

The program was distributed over 8 weeks, during which 18 (the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021) training sessions were held (each session was 60 minutes), with 2 sessions per week, ranging from easy to difficult: in addition to a session for the pre- post-, and follow-up measurements.

2.4.5   Program evaluation

Before implementing the training program, a preliminary evaluation was conducted on the members of the experimental group to assess their levels of positive psychology techniques, learned helplessness, and psychological flow. This evaluation aimed to establish a baseline for comparison. During the implementation of the program, a structural evaluation was carried out to monitor the progress of the students. The researcher prepared a specific form to track and evaluate the students' development throughout the program. This evaluation allowed for real-time monitoring of the participants' improvement and adjustment within the program. After the completion of the training program, a final evaluation was conducted using the three research tools (positive psychology techniques, learned helplessness, and psychological flow) to measure the outcomes. This evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of the program and determine the extent of changes in the participants' positive psychology techniques, learned helplessness levels, and psychological flow after completing the program.

Furthermore, a follow-up measurement was administered to the experimental group members one month after the completion of the training program. This follow-up evaluation aimed to examine the sustainability of the learning effect and determine whether the positive changes and improvements observed in the participants' positive psychology techniques, learned helplessness and psychological flow persisted over time.

Overall, this comprehensive evaluation process enabled the researchers to assess the initial levels, track progress, measure post-program outcomes, and determine the durability of the training program's effects on the experimental group members.

2.4.6   Program validity

To establish the validity of the suggested training program, it underwent an evaluation by a group of jury members, consisting of professors specializing in psychology and mental health. These experts assessed the program's procedures, objectives, and content to determine its appropriateness for its

intended purpose. After reviewing the opinions of the jury members, it was found that the training program received positive feedback and was deemed suitable for its intended goals. The validation provided by the experts affirms that the program's design, methods, and content align with the objectives it aimed to achieve. This validation process adds credibility and legitimacy to the training program, as it underwent scrutiny and received approval from knowledgeable professionals in the field. Their expert judgment confirms that the program is well-suited for its intended use and enhances confidence in its effectiveness.

3. Results

3.1 Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis is developed as follows:

H1: " There are significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the learned helplessness scale and the overall degree in the pre-and post-measurements in favor of the post-measurement".

To verify this hypothesis, the Wilcoxon test was utilized to calculate the differences between homogenous groups. The following table shows the results.

Table 2: The Results of the "Wilcoxon" Test for the Significance of the Differences between the Experimental Group Mean Ranks in the Pre- and Post-application of the Learned Helplessness Scale and Its Components.

Components		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	*Sig. Level*	Effect Size (R)	Effect Size Significance Level
Anticipating failure	Negative Ranks	11	6.00	66.00	2.958	.003	0.891	High
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00				
	Equal Ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Frustration and Self-blame	Negative Ranks	11	6.00	66.00	2.979	.003	0.898	High
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00				
	Equal Ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Lack of Self-Motivation	Negative Ranks	11	6.00	66.00	2.949	.003	0.889	High
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00				
	Equal Ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Negativity	Negative Ranks	11	6.00	66.00	2.956	.003	0.891	High
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00				
	Equal Ranks	0						
	Total	11						

The Learned Helplessness Scale	Negative Ranks	11	6.00	66.00	2.937	.003	0.885	High
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00				
	Equal Ranks	0						
	Total	11						

Table (2) results demonstrate that:

- The values of (z) on the learned helplessness scale and its components ranged from (2.979-2.937), and all of these values are significant at (0.01).

- The values of (r) on the learned helplessness scale and its components ranged from (0.885-0.989), and all of these values indicated the high effect size of the training program on decreasing the learned helplessness and its components.

- There are significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the learned helplessness scale and the overall degree in the pre-and post-measurements in favor of the post-measurement, indicating the validation of the first hypothesis.

3.2 Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis is developed as follows:

H2: " There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the learned helplessness scale and the overall degree in the post- and follow-up measurements (after a month)".

To verify this hypothesis, the Wilcoxon test was utilized to calculate the differences between homogenous groups. The following table shows the results.

Table 3: The Results of the "Wilcoxon" Test for the Significance of the Differences between the Mean Ranks of the Experimental Group in the Post and Follow-up Application of the Learned Helplessness Scale and Its Components (after a month).

Components		N. of ranks	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z value	Sig. Level	Sig.
Anticipating failure	Negative Ranks	1	1.50	1.50	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	1	1.50	1.50			
	Equal ranks	9					
	Total	11					
Frustration and Self-blame	Negative Ranks	1	1.00	1.00	1.000	.317	NS
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00			
	Equal ranks	10					
	Total	11					
Lack of Self-Motivation	Negative Ranks	3	2.00	6.00	1.732	.083	NS
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00			

	Equal ranks	8					
	Total	11					
Negativity	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00			
	Equal ranks	11					
	Total	11					
The Learned Helplessness Scale	Negative Ranks	4	3.13	12.50	1.414	.157	NS
	Positive Ranks	1	2.50	2.50			
	Equal ranks	6					
	Total	11					

Table (3) results demonstrate that:

- All (z) values are not significant.

- There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the learned helplessness scale and the overall degree in the post- and follow-up measurements (after a month), indicating the validation of the second hypothesis.

3.3 Testing the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis is developed as follows:

H3: " There are significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the psychological flow scale and the overall degree in the pre-and post-measurements in favor of the post-measurement".

To verify this hypothesis, the Wilcoxon test was utilized to calculate the differences between homogenous groups. The following table shows the results.

Table 4: The Results of the "Wilcoxon" Test for the Significance of the Differences between the Experimental Group Mean Ranks in the Pre- and Post-application of the psychological flow Scale and Its Components.

Components		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	Significance Level	Effect Size (R)	Effect Size Significance Level
A balance between challenge and skill	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.947	.003	0.888	High
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Integration between action	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.953	.003	0.890	High

and awareness	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Clearly identified goals	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.947	.003	0.888	High
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Unambiguous Feedback	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.943	.003	0.887	High
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Complete focus on the task	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.952	.003	0.890	High
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Sense of Control	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.971	.003	0.895	High
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Lack of awareness or sense of self	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.952	.003	0.890	High
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00				
	Equal ranks	0						
	Total	11						
Feeling either rapidly or	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.956	.003	0.891	High

slowly over time	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00			
	Equal ranks	0					
	Total	11					
Self-enjoyment	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	2.971		
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00		.003	0.895	High
	Equal ranks	0					
	Total	11					
Psychological flow scale-	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00			0.885
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00	2.936	.003		High
	Equal ranks	0					
	Total	11					

Table (4) results demonstrate that:

- The values of (z) on the psychological flow scale and its components ranged from (2936 - 2.971), and all of these values are significant at (0.01).

- The values of (r) on the learned helplessness scale and its components ranged from (0.885- 0.895), and all of these values indicated the high effect size of the training program on increasing the psychological flow and its components.

- There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the psychological flow scale and the overall degree in the pre-and post-measurements in favor of the post-measurement, indicating the validation of the third hypothesis.

3.4 Testing the Fourth Hypothesis

The fourth hypothesis is developed as follows:

H4: " There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the psychological flow scale and the overall degree in the post- and follow-up measurements (after a month)".

To verify this hypothesis, the Wilcoxon test was utilized to calculate the differences between homogenous groups. The following table shows the results.

Table 5: The Results of the "Wilcoxon" Test for the Significance of the Differences between the Mean Ranks of the Experimental Group in the Post and Follow-up Application of the Psychological Flow Scale and Its Components (after a month).

Components	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	Significance Level	Significance

A balance between challenge and skill	Negative Ranks	1	1.50	1.50	1.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	1	1.50	1.50			
	Equal Ranks	9					
	Total	11					
Integration between action and awareness	Negative Ranks	6	4.25	25.50	0.368	.713	NS
	Positive Ranks	3	6.50	19.50			
	Equal Ranks	2					
	Total	11					
Clearly identified goals	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00			
	Equal Ranks	11					
	Total	11					
Unambiguous Feedback	Negative Ranks	1	1.50	1.50	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	1	1.50	1.50			
	Equal Ranks	9					
	Total	11					
Complete focus on a task	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00			
	Equal Ranks	11					
	Total	11					
Sense of Control	Negative Ranks	1	1.50	1.50	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	1	1.50	1.50			
	Equal Ranks	9					
	Total	11					
Lack of awareness or sense of self	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	.000	1.000	NS
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00			
	Equal Ranks	11					
	Total	11					
Feeling either rapidly or slowly over time	Negative Ranks	2	2.00	4.00	.577	.564	NS
	Positive Ranks	1	2.00	2.00			
	Equal Ranks	8					
	Total	11					
Self-enjoyment	Negative Ranks	1	1.50	1.50	.000	1.000	NS

	Positive Ranks	1	1.50	1.50			
	Equal Ranks	9					
	Total	11					
Psychological flow scale-	Negative Ranks	4	4.63	18.50	.073	.942	NS
	Positive Ranks	4	4.38	17.50			
	Equal Ranks	3					
	Total	11					

Table (5) results demonstrate that:

- All (z) values are not significant.

- There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the components of the psychological flow scale and the overall degree in the post- and follow-up measurement (after a month), indicating the validation of the fourth hypothesis.

4. Discussion

In the current research, the effectiveness of a training program on positive psychology techniques in decreasing learned helplessness and enhancing psychological flow among academically underachieving university students was investigated. The general result of this research supported the assumptions presented. The results illustrated that the 18 sessions of the suggested training program of positive psychology techniques decreased the underachieving students of the experimental group members' learned helplessness and increased their psychological flow level. One month later results revealed that the effect of the program had lasted regarding the two dependent variables. Hence, the training program on positive psychology techniques was seen as a positive and effective method to decrease learned helplessness and increase psychological flow.

The effectiveness of the training program can be discussed in light of the sub-hypotheses results. The reduced level of learned helplessness and its components among the members of the experimental research group can be attributed to the training program that was based on optimism, instilling hope, positive talking, self-motivation, and overcoming failure experiences helped in raising their morale and self-motivation while helped them to get rid of negative thoughts and lowered their failure, frustration, and self-blame. This result in general is consistent with the results of several studies [27 - 28 -30- 45 -67 -68].

The program content, activities, and techniques on which they were trained and its motivations, values, and conventions supported by evidence from the Quran, Sunnah, and stories from the righteous predecessors contributed to the reduced level of learned helplessness. The reason may be due to the role of the trainer in the program as a role model for students, in terms of providing an environment based on optimism, hope, and positive self-talk, arousing their academic motivation, training them in planning skills and managing time effectively, overcoming failure experiences, instilling religious faith in them, and an atmosphere The friendliness, love, familiarity, and fun that the researcher tried to provide during the training and the trainer's employment of the methods, techniques, and activities in the program. In this regard, several previous studies confirmed the role of the teacher and the training content based on reinforcement and instilling hope in reducing the level of learned helplessness among underachieving students [3 -14 -70].

The increased level of psychological flow and its components among the research group members can be attributed to the training program that utilized techniques of effectively organizing and

managing time, self-motivation, optimism, instilling hope, positive thinking, and happiness benefited the underachieving students in the full engagement in the activities they do. It helped them feel high pleasure despite facing difficult challenges, a complete focus on what they did, rushing lively towards activities with a general sense of success in dealing with their activities, and the clarity of their goals. This result is, in general, consistent with the results of several studies [17-18- 21 - 22 - 23- 69].

Furthermore, the increased level of psychological flow may be due to the nature of the training program content (skills, values, and knowledge) in which they were trained and the trainer's role who provided an environment based on positive self-talk, positive thinking, and motivation. This result agrees with the results of various previous studies illustrating that positive thinking skills, reinforcement, and optimism contribute to developing psychological flow among underachieving students [18- 19- 66].

The continuity of the training program's effectiveness in reducing learned helplessness and increasing psychological flow among underachieving students can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the program's effectiveness lies in helping students master positive thinking techniques and cultivating a continuous practice of these skills throughout the training. As students become proficient in utilizing positive thinking techniques, they can apply them automatically in various situations and challenges they encounter beyond the training program. The incorporation of Quranic texts and prophetic hadiths in the program further deepens the students' religious motivations, encourages ongoing effort, fosters optimism, and helps them overcome experiences of failure. This integration of religious teachings and principles supports the lasting impact of the program and facilitates the students' utilization of these techniques when faced with different situations. Moreover, by linking the program's content to the students' social and religious reality, the program becomes more relevant and relatable to their lives. This connection strengthens the students' ability to apply the learned techniques in different contexts, ensuring the sustained impact of the program.

The program's content includes a balanced integration of knowledge, practice, and conventions, which contribute to its enduring effect. Students not only acquire knowledge but also actively engage in practice through assigned homework and real-life situations. This active application of skills in practical settings reinforces the students' ability to utilize positive thinking techniques beyond the program's duration. Overall, the continuity of the training program's effectiveness can be attributed to the students' mastery of positive thinking techniques, the integration of religious teachings, the program's relevance to their social and religious reality, and the active application of skills in various contexts. This result is consistent with the study of Zahran [39] that the learner's mastery of the techniques of positive psychology continues after the end of the program for a long time if he is immersed in it and feels its importance, which affects his psychological health positively.

5. Conclusion

The current research reflects recent trends in the field of special education to develop the skills of underachieving students to face academic challenges by developing the techniques of positive psychology to reduce learned helplessness and develop their psychological flow. In light of the rejection and acceptance of the research hypotheses, different conclusions were reached. Academic underachievement is a phenomenon that affects all educational systems in the world, including the university stage, which causes a huge waste in educational efforts. Academic underachievement of university students should be reduced as it is one of the causes of academic delay. Besides, developing psychological flow among underachieving students is very important because it helps them to focus fully on their academic activities and tasks and to engage in activities with a sense of

success and pleasure. Moreover, the techniques of positive psychology must be developed among underachieving university students (optimism, instilling hope, positive thinking, happiness, managing time effectively, and overcoming failure experiences) as it contributes to reducing learned helplessness and developing their psychological flow. Finally, positive psychology techniques must be included in the content of the courses and the training of faculty members to help underachieving students in overcoming experiences of failure, reducing learned helplessness, and developing their psychological flow.

6. Recommendations and Further Research

- To enhance the support provided to underachieving students and effectively apply positive psychology techniques, organizing training courses and workshops for faculty members is a valuable initiative. These training opportunities can focus on educating faculty members about the use of positive psychology techniques specifically tailored for underachieving students. The goal is to equip faculty members with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement these techniques and positively impact students' academic performance, reducing learned helplessness, and fostering psychological flow.

- Translate the techniques of positive psychology among underachieving students into a culture and systematic practice.

- Employ the curricula, teaching methods, and educational guidance for all academic levels to reduce the learned helplessness of underachieving students and to develop their psychological flow.

- Urge those in charge of educational planning and policies to develop the techniques of positive psychology among underachieving students through training, educational, and counseling programs.

- Conduct more research that contributes to developing psychological flow and reducing learned helplessness for underachieving students.

- Further studies of the same variables on other samples are needed. The researcher suggests conducting other research on the same variables with other groups and environments with multiple cultural, social, and economic levels.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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