

BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA

The Faculty of Psychology and Education Science



DOCTORAL THESIS

LONG ABSTRACT

Facilitating Academic Performance Using Neuro-Linguistic Programming (N.L.P) as an Emotional Support among High School Students.

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I. Introduction

Key Words: Academic Performance, High school students, Adolescence, Emotional support in education, Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Care pedagogy.

I.1 General Background

Upon entering the 21st century, most education systems were still principally operated based on theories which were formed according to ideal and social patterns of the modern era. During that era, there has been a social and cultural consensus over the objectives of education, and the pedagogical practice it should implement. The purpose of these super objectives in the modern era was clear: to serve the ideology, culture and interest of society, and to shape the young generation accordingly (Yosefun & Shmida, 2006). Since the beginning of the post-modern era, there has been an undermining of these patterns, as well as of the definitions of the essence of education, its purposes and the fundamental parameters upon which it should exist. Setting the super objectives turned out to be a difficult task in the face of the loss of the status that absolute truths had in the previous era. Furthermore, the spiritual authority of the education establishment was undermined in the face of alternative external socialization agents who based their ideology on information and communication. Therefore, the education system in the post-modern era was in a conflict: on the one hand, it was aware of its social responsibility in shaping the next generation; on the other hand, the post-modern era did not provide a social and cultural model to guide it in fulfilling these tasks. The search for solutions for this conflict came across several suggestions. The only matter agreed upon was the need for a fundamental change in the existing educational perception and a creation of new theoretical and practical paradigms which will match the post-modern era. The Israeli education system did not evade these requirements.

In Israel, as in the rest of the world, there is a sense of discontent from the products of the education system. This discontent regards the students' academic achievements, internalization of values and behavioral patterns. Many students do not acquire basic literacy skills, and receive low grades in national and international tests; the number of violent incidents has been increasing, there is more alienation and isolation, and the number of school dropouts is on the rise (Piron, 2013).

The theoretical background for this paper is based on one of the suggested solutions. The solution emphasizes skills for creating an ethical environment in which education will take place. These ethics should be based on encouraging the growth of competent, caring, loving and loveable people.

Noddings (1998) has argued that education from the Care perspective has four key components: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation (Noddings, 1998).

One type of Israeli support for this innovative pedagogy is the view which negates the “accumulative model” as the only manner in which educational influence operates. The premise of the “accumulative model” is that you can achieve educational goals mainly by supplying multiple opportunities for learning and studying. A systematic supply of learning time will increase the students’ accumulation of knowledge and skills, even if they are not motivated, or if the learnt material is of no interest to them. According to the view which negates this conception, the required addition is addressing students’ key experiences and turning points in order to demonstrate the great power of interpersonal influence in the education process. Such experiences are defined by their ability to create emotional sensations, conscious insights and self-discoveries, which shape the identity of the individual (Yair, 2006).

The practical solution for the implementation of the change suggested in this paper comes from the field of the Neuro-Linguistic Programming model - NLP.

The NLP model offers a set of basic assumptions, which match the ethics on which Noddings suggests education should be based. In addition, the model offers a replete set of practical tools and techniques meant to help achieve the goals of containment and care.

This paper aims to add another tier to the knowledge regarding the place of emotions in education, track the inner world of high school students, and try to characterize their various responses to a program whose goal is to provide them with tools for mental strengthening. Although adolescent intervention programs exist in Israel and around the world, they have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention, not to mention programs based on the NLP model. This study tested the way in which

the NLP model may assist educators in helping the adolescent with scholastic challenges, and better prepare him or her in the transition into the adult world.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of an emotional support program based on the NLP model on the academic performance of high school students.

I.2 The importance of the research

The significance of this study is that it is an innovative experiment, which attempts to deal with the complex subject of the relations between the adolescent's emotional state and his or her academic performance, and the adolescent's ability to construct a vital bridge between these two components using the NLP model.

Underlying the research goal was the belief that the presence of a caring adult, who addresses the adolescent's internal world, can have valuable influence on the adolescent's life, and particularly on his or her learning orientation. Furthermore, this value can be achieved by a program based on the NLP model.

The research findings may show that a school which aims to be relevant for its students should be attentive to the needs of all parties. At the same time the school should protect its values, while integrating solutions to conflicts, not by being an arbitrator. It is possible that in a decentralized world, overflowing with information, pluralistic in values and mechanisms, there is a need for a model which offers complementing, empowering, organizing alternative solutions, such as the NLP model.

I.3 The research objectives

To examine the implications of an NLP-based emotional support program on the academic performance of high school students;

To further the understanding of the relationship between a student's emotional state and his or her academic performance;

To further the understanding of the effect of participation in the NLP-based emotional support program on other aspects of students' lives.

I.4 The research questions

- In what manner does the emotional support program promote the students' self-efficacy?
- In what manner does the emotional support program promote the students' motivation for learning?
- What is the impact of the program for emotional support on the students' GPA in the subjects of Mathematics, Humanities and English as a foreign language?
- What is the impact of the emotional support program on students' scholastic functioning?
- What was the significance of participating in the program for the students in terms of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication?

II. Theoretical foundations

This study aims to advance the knowledge of the effect of high-school students' emotional state on their academic performance. In addition, the study seeks practical methods for incorporating the NLP model in the education system in various ways. Specifically, the researcher applied her professional NLP experience to design a holistically oriented study of the use of NLP with high-school students' as an emotional support program and to determine its effect on academic performance.

To understand how an emotional support program can be used with high-school students, the researcher studied the literature of the relevant theories that have been applied to creating such programs for education systems and the resulting findings.

II.1 Theoretical foundations concerning high school students' academic performance

Four main themes emerging from the literature on academic performance were identified as useful:

- learning motivation theories: self-determination (Decy & Ryan, 1985) and achievement-goal orientation (Ames, 1992) theories explaining the possible motivation of students' academic performance;

- self-efficacy: social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) explaining students' judgment of their ability to employ behaviors;
- educational assessment: the main concept used to evaluate students' achievements, in the Israeli education system as well, is the grade point average (GPA); and
- the behavioral component in the learning context: studies found a connection between students' scholastic functioning and their academic performance (Sanchez 2012, Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012); scholastic functioning has been mainly studied with respect to school attendance, class tardiness, and involvement in disciplinary violations.

II.2 Emotional state of adolescence or why do they need emotional support?

In the context of a study of high-school students, certain theories of puberty and their implications must also be applied:

- second process of individuation (Blos, 1979);
- developing a personal identity, *form independence* (Erikson, 1968);
- *identity status categories*, which include *moratorium*, *identity achieved*, *identity diffused*, *identity foreclosure* (Marcia, 2003);
- cognitive development, including *formal operations stage* (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958);
- egocentrism, consisting of the *imaginary audience* and *personal fable* (Elkind, 1967); and
- moral development, such as pre-conventional and conventional stages (Kohlberg, 1963).

II.3 The connection of emotions and academic performance

To deepen and broaden the understanding of the emotional state of adolescents, the possible effect of global development was considered and so were factors that are unique to adolescents in the Israeli society.

The central theory supporting the premise of this study on the connection between emotions and academic performance derives from Noddings' care pedagogy theory (1984, 2002). A major theme that emerges from Noddings work (1998) is that caring increases the chances of engaging students. Noddings used the terms modeling, dialogue practice, and confirmation to support her theory of care in the educational context. Noddings also described the concept of confirmation as a demonstration of

care. Confirmation is the teacher's giving affirmation and encouragement in order to bring out the best in the student. Trust and continuity were also needed to solidify the relationship.

Noddings' theory stresses the significance of the factors that mediate between the emotional state of students and their academic performance. As previously mentioned in the literature review, other scholars have found that the emotional relationships between teachers and students and the school climate are positively correlated with academic performance.

Hence the question: What is being done in the different education frameworks to invest in the emotional state of the student (assuming that such investment will promote better academic performance)? The literature review depicts a wide yet unsatisfactory treatment of these programs in the world and in Israel. It appears that there are general reforms, models, and many programs aimed at strengthening social emotional learning (SEL) (Elias, 2006). However, despite the great investment in them, they do not generate the desired result – a student possessing emotional strength, who is able to meet the learning challenges of the education system (Raz, 2009). It appears there is a gap between the pedagogic and theoretical bodies of knowledge – which both acknowledge the impact of investing in the student's emotional state on his or her academic performance – and pedagogic practices, which must be updated. Therefore, it is of value to propose a new direction to focus educational policies makers' efforts on resources for pedagogy in high schools.

II.4 NLP- Particularities of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and its contribution to Education

NLP stands for Neuro-Linguistic Programming, a name that encompasses three influential components involved in the human experience. The neurological system regulates the way our bodies function, language determines how we interact and communicate with other people, and our programming determines the way we define our world and our models. NLP describes the fundamental dynamics between mind (neuro) and language (linguistic) and how their interplay affects our body and behavior (programming) (Dilts, 1983).

In studying the relevance of the NLP model to education, the question arose as to whether the model could be used to improve the emotional state of high-school students, thereby facilitating their academic performance. Support for this was received from three sources:

1. It has been found that the NLP model is based on similar assumptions and values to those of care pedagogy (Noddings, 1992), which is the foundation stone of this study.
2. A review of the studies that examined the effectiveness of the use of the NLP model in various spheres of education (Carey, et al., 2010; Millroad, 2004; Tosey, and Mathison, 2010) shows that the NLP model has the ability to improve teaching quality and students' performance.
3. A review of studies that examined the effectiveness of the use of the NLP model as mental therapy (Genser-Medlitsch & Schütz, 1997) shows improvement in self-perception, quality of life, and being able to cope with stress.(Stipancic et al, 2010).

Thus, on the basis of these findings, the NLP-based emotional support program was designed. Figure 1 illustrates the process whereby the program for this study evolved. Care pedagogy and the NLP model form the theoretical foundation of the program; above them are the NLP-model tools, concepts, and techniques, which were specifically selected because they had been tested in other studies that examined different uses of the NLP model in education and emotional therapy. The unique features of adolescence discussed in a chapter devoted to this topic served as a filter for choosing these particular tools from a variety offered by the model. Thus, the NLP BESP emotional support program that was used in the study emerged.

The intervention was conducted by means of individual sessions with each one of the experiment group students, each lasting about one hour; ten to twelve sessions have been held. The duration of the full program was about half a year.

The NLP techniques used in the intervention were chosen from a large variety, taking students' age in consideration. The first two meetings were designed to evaluate the current emotional state of the student, while also establishing rapport and a sense of trust between moderator and student; in the third meeting, the goal was to strengthen the inner resources of the student; the fourth meeting aimed to strengthen

the ability for empathy and compassion; From the fifth meeting and on, different NLP techniques were applied. These techniques focused on creating and establishing the change in the present and future. The structured outline of each session's tasks allowed for a degree of flexibility in adapting the session to the students' unique needs.

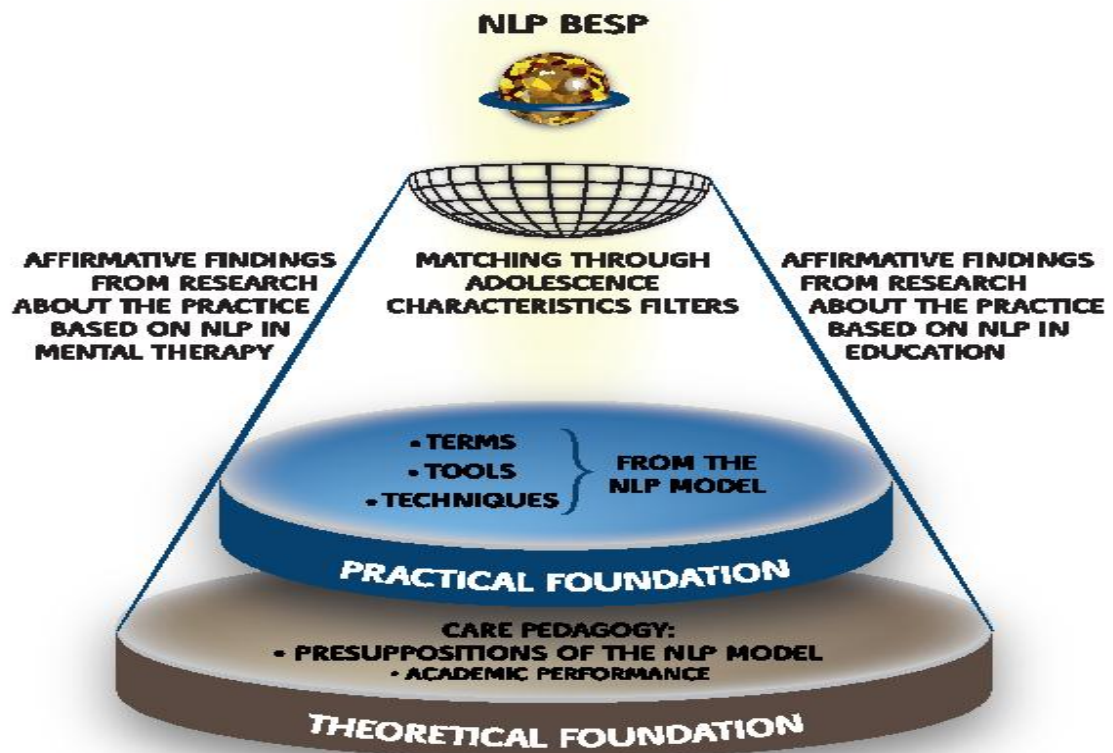


Figure 1. Design of NLP-based emotional support program.

III. The description of the practical pedagogical research

III.1 Conceptual Framework of the study

In the current study a Smartphone was used as a graphic illustration of the conceptual framework of the study. There are a number of reasons behind the choice in the Smartphone. First, it is one of the most popular accessories among the research population – adolescents. The Smartphone encompasses multiple functions of communication, such as the phone, the internet, notes, etc. As such, it represents the holistic pedagogical conception of this study. One of the fundamental principles of the NLP is that symbols are the language of the sub-conscious. Since change is unable to occur without the sub-conscious, then it is imperative to speak in its language. In addition, the use of a symbol, in particular one as modern as the Smartphone, serves to aid in the reading of this research, to develop in new directions through which it will be possible to push high-school students towards their commitment to their own academic performance.



Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the study.

Care pedagogy, as the theoretical basis of this work, is illustrated in Figure 2 as the Power button. The NLP and NLP BESP models, which were found suitable for improving the emotional state of students, are parallel to the Operation button, which is used for all the functions of the phone. The frame of the cell phone represents the theories about adolescence and adolescent characteristics, which form the framework within which high-school students function.

The telephone icon represents the contribution of care to the school climate. This icon serves to open the channels of communication in general. It also includes all the outgoing and incoming calls. In the same way, the school climate is the basis for all student involvement in the school, both with other persons and with the learning material. Students' concept of their school climate comprises the entirety of their experiences of communication with the educational staff.

The Contacts icon represents the contribution of care to teacher-student relations. This icon controls the modes of communication with people whose details the owner of the phone chooses to save in his or her personal device. The list also enables the students to choose the type of connection they would like to initiate – a phone call, an SMS message, or other. In the same way, teacher-student relations based on care can lead to significant improvements in the academic performance of the student.

The Messages icon shows the correspondence of NLP BESP with other existing programs in the education system that have to do with social-emotional learning.

The screen background represents the student's academic performance. Pressing all the aforementioned buttons determines what will be shown on the screen. Similarly, the student's academic performance is a product of all the aforementioned components.

On the screen itself are four icons representing the four variables that constitute academic performance in this study – motivation, self-capability, the GPA, and scholastic functioning. Also appearing on the screen are two applications: Facebook, which represents interpersonal communication and the Google Chrome application, which is a type of inner operating system representing intrapersonal communication. These two types of communication are also expected to change following the participation in NLP BESP.

III.2 Formation of the research

III.2.1 Research Variables

Independent research variable. The independent variable is defined as the extent of emotional support the student is exposed to through participation in the intervention program.

Dependent variables. Academic performance manifested as

- student GPAs in major subjects– mathematics, the humanities, and English as a foreign language;
- students' scholastic functioning: attendance, tardiness, and involvement in disciplinary violations;
- students' level of learning motivation;
- students' self-efficacy;

- students' interpersonal communication; and students' intrapersonal communication

III.2.2 Research hypotheses. On the basis of the theories supporting this study, the study group, consisting of students participating in the emotional support program, is expected to improve academic performance. It is expected that the changes will differ among participants, as the changes interact with the different personal goals each participant will set. The following hypotheses will be empirically examined in the proposed study:

1. The NLP BESP program will increase the high-school participants' sense of self efficacy.
2. The NLP BESP program will increase participants' learning motivation.
3. The NLP BESP program will improve students' GPAs in core subjects (Mathematics, the Humanities, and English as a foreign language).
4. The NLP BESP program will improve the participants' scholastic functioning.
5. Participation in the NLP BESP program will improve variables related to the students' general intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

III. 2.3 Theoretical premises of the research – a mixed methods approach

A mixed methods research design was used in this study. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) provided the definition of a 'mixed methods' research which served as a guideline for this study:

"Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of the qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (p. 5).

The use of qualitative and quantitative methodology was combined to achieve the overall quality of the research. The term 'mixed methods', refers to all procedures responsible for collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in the context of a single study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The mixed methods paradigm in the field of education is still in its initial stages of development. There are existing

debates regarding what should be the nature of the methodology, research design and other philosophical issues related to the methods involved (Bocos', 2007).

III.2.4 Design and stages of the research

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to collect, analyze and mix quantitative and qualitative data while exploring the implementation of an emotional support program (NLP based) for high school students.

The research design consisted of the quasi-experimental and multiple case study components (Yin, 2003).

The design of research stages:

Phase One: Quantitative data collection - examining the academic performance of the students prior to the intervention program. The examination of the students was made using a closed-ended questionnaire for the students and a closed-ended questionnaire for the teachers. GPA and Scholastic Functioning Data about the students were retrieved from the school database.

Phase Two: The intervention program consisted of 10-12 individual sessions for each student. The meetings were held once a week, according to the NLP therapy plan. The duration of the NLP BESE was four to six months.

Phase Three: Quantitative and Qualitative data collection – examining the academic performance of the students after the intervention. The examination of the students was done using a closed-ended questionnaire for the students and a closed-ended questionnaire for the teachers. GPA and Scholastic Functioning Data about the students were retrieved from the school database.

Qualitative data collection was made using in-depth interviews with the students, and open-ended questionnaires were filled out by the moderators (therapists).

The following figure represents the research design visually:

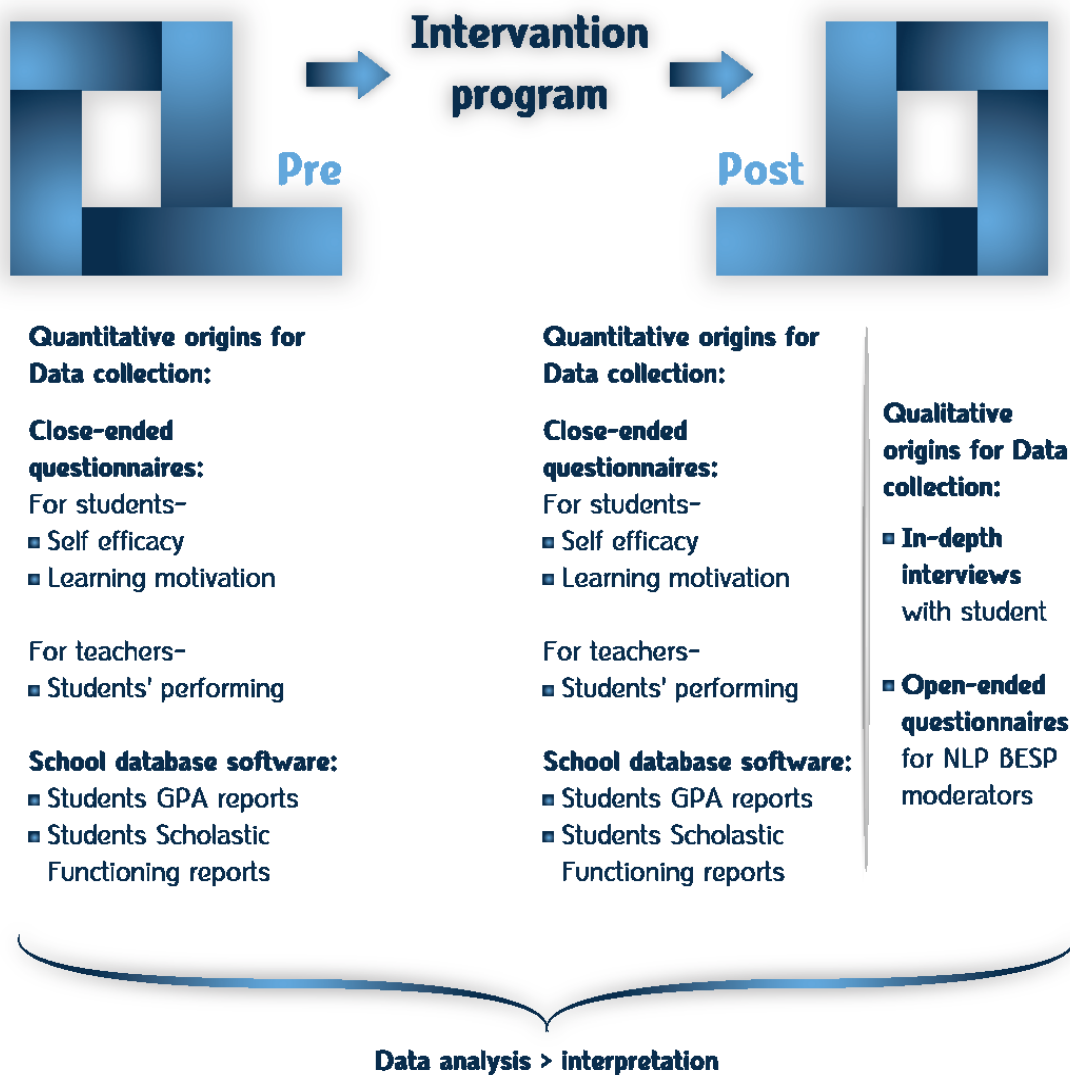


Figure 3. Research design for use of Methods and Instruments.

III.2.5 Research Instruments

The Quantitative Research Instruments included:

1. Various closed-ended questionnaires.
2. Data reports supplied by the school database software.

The Qualitative Research Instruments included:

1. In-depth interviews.
2. Open-ended questionnaires

Table 1: Sources for data collection for each of the research questions

Research variable/ No. of Research Question (R.Q)	Origin of Data		Study Sample
	Quantitative (Before and After NLP BESP)	Qualitative (After NLP BESP only)	
SELF-EFFICACY R.Q. No. 1	General Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (15 students)	Interviews (15 students)	Research Group
		Open-ended Questionnaires (6 moderators)	
LEARNING MOTIVATION R.Q. No. 2	Learning Motivation Questionnaire (15 students)	Interviews (15 students)	Research Group
		Students' Performance Questionnaire (8 Teachers)	
GPA R.Q. No. 3	Reports from 'MASHOV' - school Database software	Interviews (15 students)	Research & control Groups
		Open-ended Questionnaires (6 moderators)	
SCHOLASTIC FUNCTIONING R.Q. No. 4	Reports from 'MASHOV'- school Database software	Interviews (15 students)	Research & control Groups
		Open-ended Questionnaires (6 moderators)	
INTERPERSONAL & INTRAPERSONAL Communication R.Q. No. 5	Students' Performance Questionnaire For Teachers	Interviews (15 students)	Research Group

III.2.6 Research sample

The research sample included an experimental group: 15 high school students; and a control group: 15 high school students matching in homeroom, gender and class levels. Eight classroom teachers of the experimental group were enrolled and six NLP BESP Intervention moderators.

IV. The Research Findings

The main goal of this study's quantitative section was to examine the academic performance of students participating in the NLP BESP. The main advantages of the quantitative research method for the current study is the collection of numerous, varied data, using various research tools. And so, it is possible to obtain an overall, representative picture of the examined phenomenon, along with its main components.

IV.1 Findings emerging from the quantitative part

IV.1.1 General Summary of Quantitative Findings

The graph presents findings indicating differences in self-efficacy and motivational patterns as found from the participating students' closed-ended questionnaires, before and after participation in the support program. This questionnaire's response scale consisted of five degrees: 5 represented a response indicating a high sense of self-efficacy and a high level of motivation, while 1 indicated a lack in a sense of self-efficacy and motivation. The following items were reversed: items in 1, 8 and the item in 15.

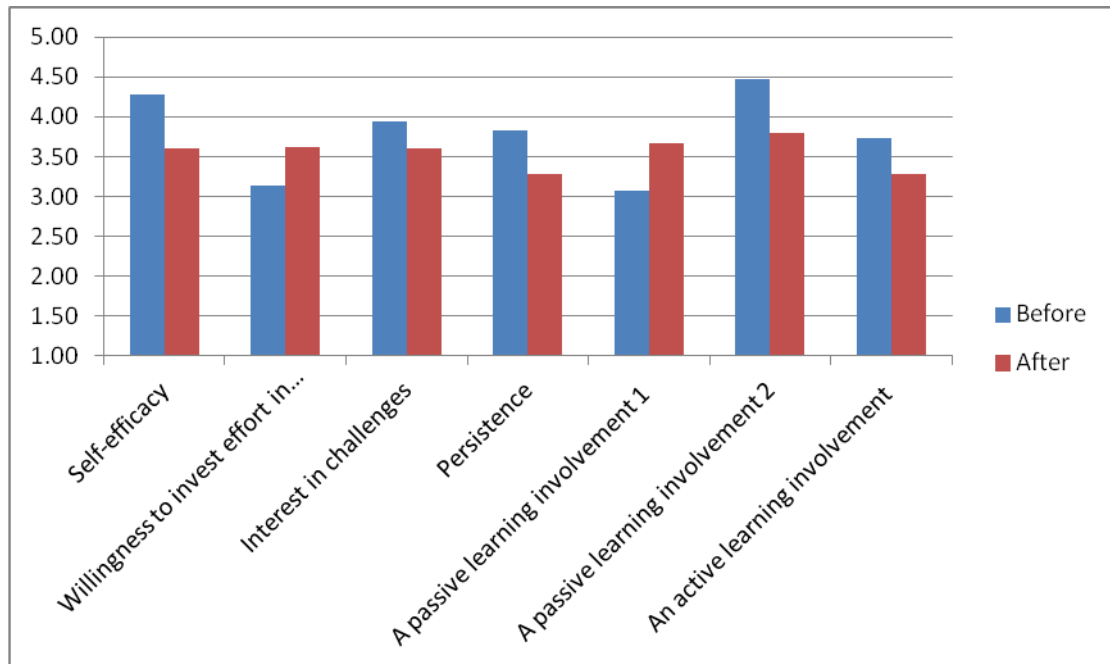


Figure 4: Self- efficacy and motivational patterns before and after participation in the program.

One can see that levels of self-efficacy and motivational patterns for learning as stated by the students were generally higher prior to participation in the program. It is also evident that no improvement in self-efficacy and motivational patterns was detected in some areas following the participation in the program. The areas in which an improvement was seen following the participation in the program were the ones that were lower in the first place ($M \leq 3.5$): the willingness to invest an effort and passive involvement 1.

The following figure presents the learning orientation, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication patterns, before and after participation in the program.

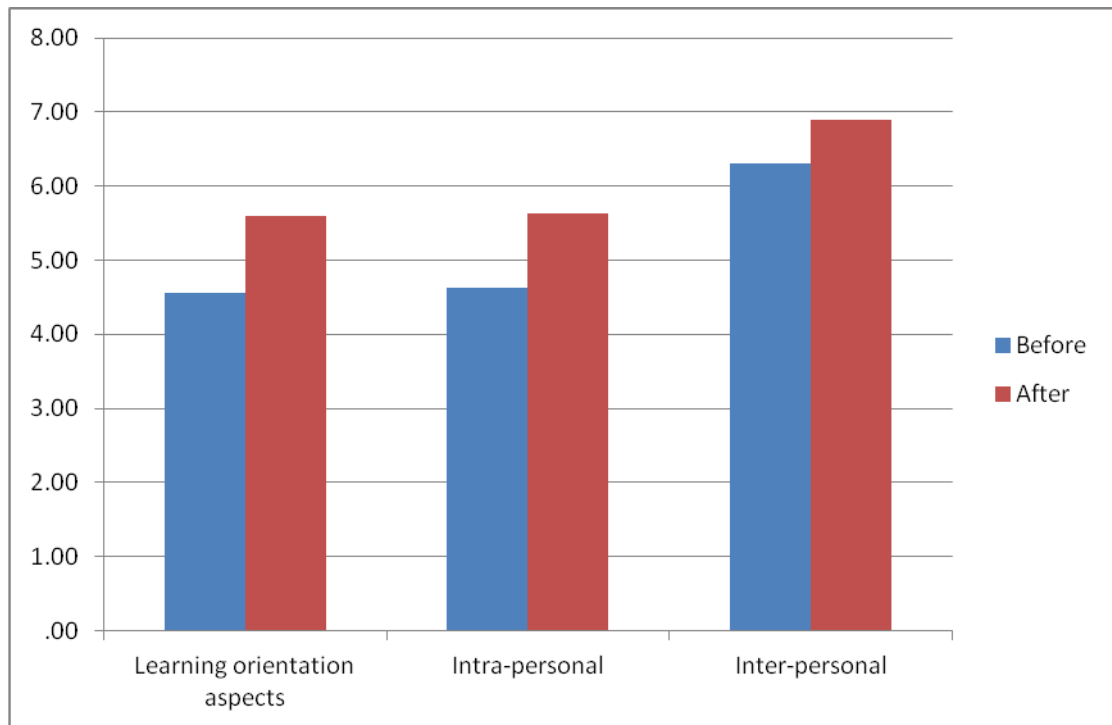


Figure 5. Results from teachers questionnaires on students functioning before and after the program.

It is clear that according to the teachers' questionnaire on students' performance, conditions improved thanks to the participation in the program in each of the three parameters; according to the teachers, the most influential effect that participation of the program had on the students was expressed in the degree of their learning orientation (M=4.56 before participation in the program, M=5.59 after participation).

The following figure presents the general average in each of the subjects: Humanities, Math and English as a foreign language for all students participating in the study (the study group and the control group), before and after the program. Data were collected using the MASHOV - the school database software.

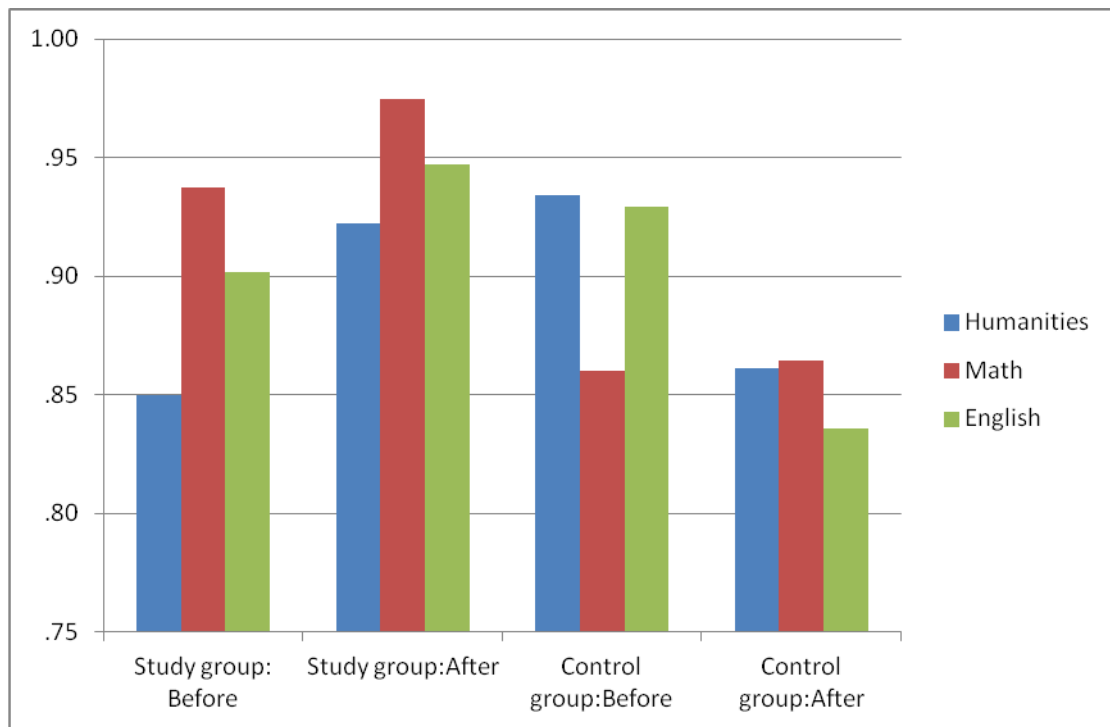


Figure 6. Grades Point Average before and after participation in the program, among the study group and the control group.

Figure 6 indicates a rise in GPA of the study group for each of the examined subjects- Humanities, Math and English as a Foreign Language. The most significant improvement was seen in the subject of Humanities (M=.85 before participation in the program and M=.92 following it). Regarding the control group, the graph reveals an inverted change, expressed as a significant decline in the grade average in the subjects of Humanities and English as a Foreign Language, while no change was detected in the subject of Math among the control group.

The next figure presents the average score in behavior as expressed in tardiness, absence and disciplinary issues of all students participating in the study (study group and control group) before and after the program. Data were collected using the MASHOV the school database software. The information is shown with the averages of the respective components in relation to the number of lessons where data were collected.

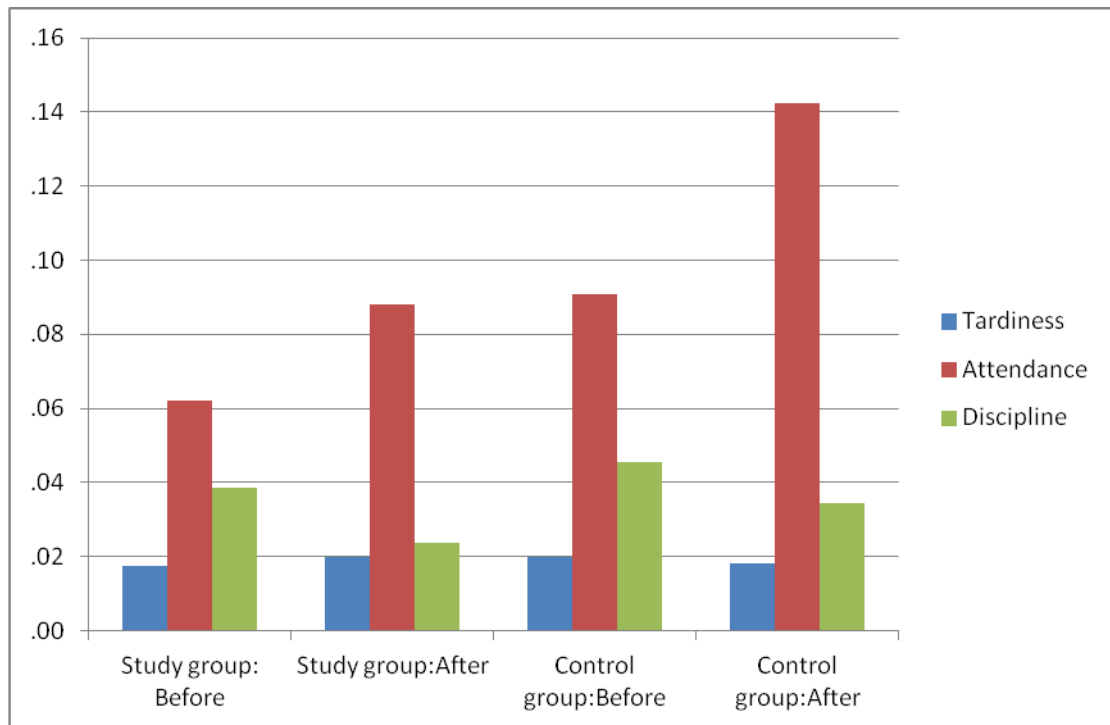


Figure 7. Scales for school functioning before and after participation in the program, for the study group and control group.

Figure 7 recognizes no significant shift occurring in the averages before and after participation in the program, both among the study group and the control group. It is evident that a certain change did occur in the matter of absence among the study group following the participation in the program, expressed as a rising trend. Within the control group, the rise in absence is significant (from $M=.09$ to $M=.14$). Concerning the matter of disciplinary issues, a decrease in the average level before the program occurred following the program, both among the study group and the control group.

IV.2 Findings emerging from the qualitative part

For the qualitative part of this research, in-depth interviews were used among the 15 students who participated in the NLP BESP and open-ended questionnaires to NLP BESP moderators. The choice was guided by the hypothesis, that “qualitative data is composed of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviors; from the subjects’ direct statements concerning their experiences, approaches, beliefs and thoughts” (Shkedi, 2003, 57) .

IV.2.1 Findings emerging from in-depth interviews with students

Table 2: Summary of qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with students.

Before NLP BESP	After NLP BESP
<u>Theme number 1: Changes in the academic performance - from “I accuse” to “I am responsible”</u>	
Studies positioned at a low priority (46.6%=7)	Appreciation of school and its implications on the future (86.6%=13)
Accusations towards the education system (86.6%=13)	Improvement in time organization and management (60% = 9)
Low academic performance (93.3%=14)	Improvement in cognitive and academic performance skills (73.3%=11)
The reawakened will to change (%100=15)	Improvement in learning motivation and GPA (66.6%=10)
<u>Theme number 2: The change in intrapersonal communication: from “I am chaotic” to “I am empowered”</u>	
The inner emotional world - as the origin of seclusion and reclusiveness (53.3%=8) - as the trigger for volatile reactions (46.6%=7)	Exploring the personal inner world, developing flexibility and ability to regulate and manage emotions (93.3%=14)
The feeling of self-efficacy: - doubts regarding their self-efficacy (60%=9) - high competency (40%=6)	Empowering self-efficacy and self-esteem (80% = 12)
<u>Theme number 3: The change in intrapersonal communication: From being pent-up in the first position (egocentric) to opening up to the second (the other) and third positions (observer)</u>	
Communication within the peer group: - good relations with their peers(66.6% = 10) - difficulties in interpersonal communication with peers (33.3% = 5)	Improved relations within the peer group (80% = 12)
Communication with the parents: - difficulties based on trouble at school (53.3% = 8) - based on issues unrelated to school	Improvement in relationships with parents (53.3% = 8)

(40% = 6)	
Difficulties in relationships with teachers and authority figures(73.3% = 11)	Improved relations with teachers(60% = 9)
<u>Theme number 4: Reference to the program's essence and evaluation of its potential effect (After NLP BEBP)</u>	
Recommendation to participate in the program	- Unequivocally positive (80%=12) - Reservations regarding recommending the participation (20%=3)
Providing an explanation by the participants on how the change occurs	Inability to explain how the change occurred(86.6% = 13)
Overview of the experience	- A positive and developing experience (93.3% = 14) - Effect on other areas of their lives and testified to continued use of the tools they acquired (73% = 11) - No significant change occurred (6.6% = 1)

IV.2.2 Analysis of the moderators' open-ended questionnaires

Table. 3: Summary of the qualitative analysis of the moderators' open-ended questionnaires

Category	No. of Comments	Sample Comments
First Theme: Changes in the academic performance axis		
First category – Improvement on students' learning motivation	86.6%= 13	<i>"Invests; sets himself goals and accomplishes them; became active with educational tasks"</i>
Second category – Improvement in study habits	60%= 9	<i>"improved concentration; more time to study; devoting time to school"</i>
Third category – Improvement in emotional issues which relate to school	73.3%= 11	<i>"Decrease in examination anxiety; more liberated and free to learn; awakened desire to study"</i>
Fourth category – Improvement in academic achievements	40%= 6	<i>"Finished the year with one F compared with four F's in the middle of the year; average over 80"</i>
Second Theme: Changes in intrapersonal communication axis		
First category – The Impact of the program on the	73.3% =11	<i>"insights about himself; confessed to capabilities that exist in him"</i>

growth of an inner awareness		
Second category – Improvement in the ability to manage and regulate emotions	80%=12	<i>"has less fears; She is more optimistic now; he feels less cynical and critical"</i>
Third category: Improvement in self-esteem/self-efficacy	46.6% = 7	<i>"She feels she is competent; believes in herself; improved physical self-image"</i>
Fourth category – Questioning the ability of the program to influence the students' intrapersonal communication	13.3%= 2	<i>"I did not notice significant changes in the internal communication patterns"</i>
Third Theme: Changes in interpersonal communication axis		
First category – Impact of the program on expanding students' containing ability	86.6% = 13	<i>"Can step into someone else's shoes and understand him; trusts her environment; Began going out with friends"</i>
Second category – The effect of the program on balancing social life with school	53.3% = 8	<i>"Learned to balance the social and the scholastic; found that you can give room for friends and school"</i>
Fourth theme: The axis of the appreciation of the NLP BESP		
First category – The progress of the change alongside the development of the rapport between the moderator and the student	80%= 12	<i>"Began to open up; At first there was resistance; at the end of the process he is 100% trustful and dedicated"</i>
Second category – The program as a source of support and encouragement for the students	86.6%= 13	<i>"Found an attentive ear; and adult to consult with; ventilation; someone to hear me"</i>
Third category – Notes on certain elements of the program that require special adjustment	33.3%= 5	<i>"Adjust the number of questions worked on; adjust the pace, the language to adolescence"</i>

V. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter will discuss the conclusions from the research findings. It will present the various conclusions according to the following order: factual conclusions – referring to the four axes lined in the chapters of findings and discussion; practical conclusions; theoretical conclusions; suggestions for further research, and summary.

V. 1 Factual conclusions

The analysis of the research findings and the discussion raised four themes which were called axes in this study. The axes describe the influence of participation in the NLP BEP on high school students. The factual conclusions will also be presented according to these axes.

V. 1.1 Factual conclusions regarding the academic performance Axis

The research findings provide support for the notion that school in its current framework causes some of the students to become passive and even desperate facing the educational tasks required from them. Students raise serious allegations against the school and the teachers. They see school as a hostile place and the teachers as extremely distant from them mentally.

Furthermore, there was a worsening in the grades of the members of the control group, as opposed to an improvement in the grades of the research group. The findings of the comparative analysis of the students' grades in the learned subjects found that the research group performed better than the control group on all variables. Meaning, the achievements in the research group were significantly higher than the ones in the control group at the point in time after participation in the program. The following conclusion is that not participating in the program might cause deterioration in the academic performance of some students.

Participation in the NLP BEP improves the academic performance of high school students. The change is expressed in an improvement in the factors of learning orientation, GPA, engagement in the study material, rise in cognitive learning functions, decrease in involvement in disciplinary issues, time allocated to studying, and more.

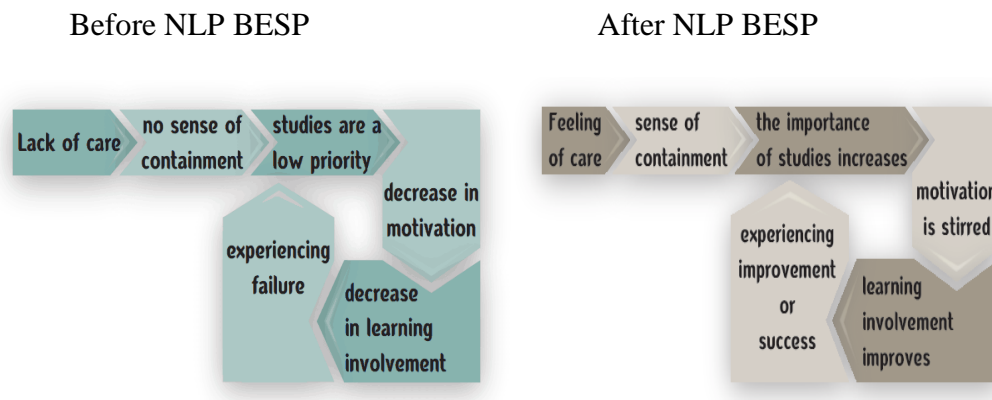


Figure 8. The influential path of care on students' learning orientation, before and after participation in NLP BESP.

V. 1.2 Factual conclusions regarding the intrapersonal communication axis

This work found support for the notion that adolescence is characterized by a chaotic inner world. The study found that some of the adolescents deal with the difficulties derived from this in two main ways: distancing and reclusiveness or agitation and rebelliousness.

Participation in NLP BESP improves the adolescent's ability to cope with the challenges of this age. The conclusion is that the process the adolescent goes through on the path to this improvement includes first and foremost the rise in awareness of internal emotional states, and then the ability to better regulate and manage the emotions.

In addition to the improvement in the ability to regulate emotions, the change in the intrapersonal communication brought about by participation the NLP BESP program creates better access to feelings such as calmness and optimism, and mainly an improvement in self-image and self-evaluation. In order to understand the change in interpersonal communication that the students have undergone, one can use the following figures:



Exemplary line:

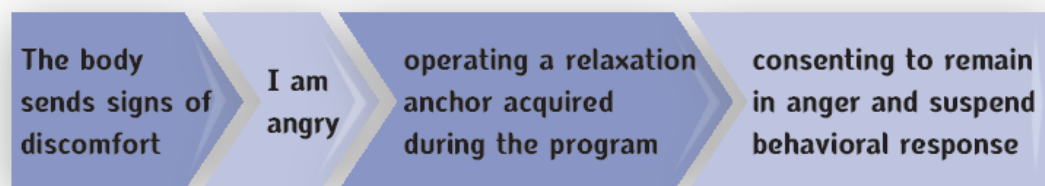


Figure 9. The line of change in intrapersonal communication of program participants.

V. 1.3 Factual conclusions regarding interpersonal communication axis

The findings before participation in the program give rise to the conclusion that adolescents feel most comfortable among a group of their equals; following that on the scale are the parents, and the teachers were found to be most distant mentally. Examining the students' views regarding the factors that may make their teachers better teachers, the affective factors are considerably more valued than professional and other factors.

The findings following participation in the NLP BESP support the view that correct guidance can lead the adolescents through a process in which they let go of the egocentrism which characterizes adolescents, and acquire the ability to open up to the idea of care, concern and consideration as part of their becoming adults who communicate easily. As part of this transformation, their inventory of responses for interpersonal communication grows - from limited and automatic responses to thought out and planned ones.

The main conclusion in this axis regards the way in which change occurs. During participation in the program, by using the tools acquired, the ability of the student to contain people of a different nature expands. The containment expansion includes the ability to put oneself in another's shoes in order to understand their behavior, as well as the ability to put oneself in the place of an observer, which allows expanding the viewing perspective in interpersonal communication situations.

The three axes mentioned above – learning, intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication – strengthen the view that the way to maximize the fulfillment of potential of high school students is viewing these axes as a whole which represents the various components of the student. Support for this conclusion can be found in the tight connection and mutual influence between these axes. Hence, it was found that the intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication dimensions in adolescents are elements of influence over their academic performance.

In principle, the influence consists of the three permanent axes. However, the components of each axis may be more varied and numerous than the ones found.

V. 1.4 Factual conclusions regarding the appreciation of the NLP BESP

On the factual level, the evidence presented in this research reinforces the view that the NLP BESP can significantly contribute to promoting the goals of the Israeli and Global High-School education system.

First, the NLP model, upon its tools and techniques which were used in its program, is suitable to be a program for adolescents. Nevertheless, the research findings emphasize the importance of maintaining flexibility in adjusting the program to this age group. The call for adjustment was expressed in terms of pace, number of questions, and sessions involving guided imagery.

The participation in the program was received by the adolescents as a positive, empowering and advancing experience. Moreover, the change they describe appears to be extensive and powerful; some of them describe it as life altering. The conclusion from this is that participation in the NLP BESP, which is a short term treatment (10-12 sessions), has the power to yield a very significant outcome for high school students.

Another conclusion supported by each of the axes in which the results of participation in the program were examined, has to do with the program's influence on other circles in life (chain reaction). Apparently, the change which follows the program is similar to a little stone which is thrown in a pool of water, and creates expanding circles around it. When one of the variables changes, it has the power to affect other variables. An example of this can be the case of the participant whose goal was to lose weight. As she achieved this goal, she also showed better academic performance, and better interpersonal communication skills.

Furthermore, the study shows that adolescents who participate in the program become emissaries of the principles taught in the program. The findings showed quite a few students who passed the tools they acquired in the program to their friends. The conclusion is that the process of spreading the model may influence other circles of partners, and as a result create an improved school climate.

In the process of selecting the students who will participate in the program, it is better to involve as many staff members as possible, as well as the students themselves. Involving the students is essential for determining their level of

commitment to the program, and therefore to the success of the process. Sagie was the only student who joined the program out of his own initiative and without a recommendation from the staff. He was also the only one who viewed the effect the program had on him as limited. We cannot come to conclusions from this single case, but it does provide some support for the need to carefully consider the process of selecting the students who will participate in such a program.

Another conclusion has to do with what is called in NLP a “well-formed goal”. This is the principle of defining the goal the moderated wants to achieve during the program in the first two sessions. Although the study did not explicitly test the differences between students who defined an educational goal and those who defined a goal of another nature, the influence of the program on the academic performance was similar for all.

V. 2 Practical conclusions

Although a case study cannot be a firm basis for policy change, the study supports the consideration of several practical implications. The practical implications from this study focus mainly on a recommendation to invest in the emotional components in the student. This investment, as the study shows, can be of value in improving identity formation and academic achievements, and mainly in improving the molding of an adult who has better communicative skills, which serves as an important foundation for functioning in society.

The study shows that a close and accepting relationship with a significant other enables the adolescent to safely explore his or her abilities, as well as his or her vulnerable points. The adolescent holds different self-perceptions regarding his or her functioning in different arenas, and he or she must combine these perceptions into one unified and consistent view of the self. To that end they need personal guidance. The existing guidance is not always sufficient or available for the adolescent. Therefore, this task is given to the school.

The NLP BESE is a program which can answer these adolescent needs. Therefore, the first practical recommendation is to apply the program in high schools for the students who want and are willing to invest in themselves. It is important to emphasize that in order to benefit the most from this program the participants should

be carefully selected. It should be ascertained that they come out of their own will, and that they are committed to the process. This could be done with the right marketing tool, which includes explanation and demonstration of the processes which take place during the sessions.

The second practical recommendation regards the program moderators. Individual treatment given by external qualified moderators is the ideal investment. However, being aware of the limitations of the education system in Israel and around the world, the researcher recommends training the educational staff with NLP tools to become the moderators. Today, the counseling staffs in the schools are extremely small, and have to deal with a variety of difficulties. In most cases, the counseling staff does not have the option to accompany the students intensively, in a way which answers all of their emotional needs. The literature review section of this paper which referred to the existing programs also did not find encouraging information regarding the ability of such programs to reach or affect the students.

The NLP moderator training has no prerequisites. Some of the colleges which train NLP therapists require some type of B.A. and some only require passing a personal interview. The reality in Israel shows that many of those who learn NLP do so for their own sake, and do not become therapists later on. The training therefore is available for any person, and especially for high school teachers, who all have academic degrees. Training a large number of school teachers in the NLP model can provide teachers with tools to develop attitudes and approaches towards students in a way which can lead to significant improvement in their academic performance, as well as in dealing with the general challenges of adolescence. The present study shows how the internalization of the NLP model can have the “domino effect”; the teachers/staff members who will go through the training will help the students, the school climate will change, and all of this will improve the learning process. Furthermore, as these lines are written, most of the high schools in Israel are going through the reform of “Oz Le'tmu'ra” (“power to change”). One of the most important changes within this reform is the addition of tutorials, i.e. personal sessions between teacher and student. Training teachers with the NLP model can significantly advance the benefit from and efficiency of the dialogue between the teacher and the student during these sessions.

It is possible that implementing these recommendations also requires a certain change among decision makers in the education system in Israel and around the world. The researcher is hopeful that the brave educators will be willing to open the doors to NLP based programs, thereby opening their minds to accepting that there are other models besides those offered by classic psychology. It is also hoped that in the spirit of post-modernism –they will understand that there is room, and even demand, to place these side by side – classic psychology, NLP, and perhaps other methods, without them being mutually exclusive.

V. 3 Theoretical conclusions

The mixed methods research has allowed for a more in-depth enquiry into the emotional world of the participants, in a way which is not possible in a different type of research. This study provides an additional link to a wider understanding of the need to address emotional-mental-social components among high-school students, and the role NLP can perform in this respect.

On the theoretic plain, this study is a synthesis of the different theoretical foundations, and takes them one step forward in the attempt to apply the Care worldview in the way a school addresses its students. This was done through the experiment in which an NLP BESP was applied in order to improve the emotional state of high school students.

The findings show an adolescent thirst for an adult they can trust, who is not considered a threat, and who can direct them on their path of identity formation. The mere ability to speak in front of a person with whom they have developed full trust is an experience of growth for them. The study found support for the claim that adolescents in high school find difficulty in completing the central tasks of this age, such as: meeting the demands of the education system, forming individual identity, and practicing advantageous interpersonal communication. It is even possible that this gives support to the claim that the more complex society becomes, the more complicated these tasks become. The adolescents feel more lost, and yearn for a lent ear, which can also be a guiding hand.

This work can offer support for the Care Pedagogy (Noddings, 1984). The Care theory and ethics suggest a new point of view on all education components, including

basing the ethical school climate on caring relations. According to this theory, attentiveness to the learner's needs, and flexible and dialogical teaching methods based on caring for others, are the basis for the success of the education process. The findings of this study give prominence to the notion that indeed responding to the learner's emotional needs and creating the opportunity for a caring relationship between him/her and an adult enables improved academic performance.

This paper also adds a special aspect to the theory of Care. By combining this theory with the NLP model, the study expands the scope of connection between a student's emotional state and academic performance.

Furthermore, the study also invites the reader not only to examine the change which takes place during the process of education as a linear change, meaning, as a product of accumulating learning opportunities, but also to consider the ability of key experiences becoming turning points in the life of the student.

V. 4 Recommendations for further research

The importance of the current study, as well as its limitations, is a catalyst for additional studies in this field, which will evaluate the value of an NLP based emotional support program for adolescents.

The research group in this study included 15 participants. Due to the small sample, it is recommended to conduct a similar study on a larger population of students, from which generalizations can be made. Also, it is recommended to test the ability of the NLP BEBP to affect a population whose background is more heterogenic. The NLP is common in Arab countries as well, and the knowledge exists in Arabic too; therefore, it would be interesting to test its effect on the Arab students in Israel, and perhaps compare the effect the model has on them with this study's research group.

In order to reach more solid and precise statements, it is recommended to conduct a long term qualitative and quantitative study, with a larger and more representative sample, which will test variables of students' emotional wellbeing in different points in time – before participation in the program, after several sessions, upon program end and several months afterwards. This will add the follow-up dimension to the examining of long term implications of participation in the program.

Another study in which both groups – the research group and the control group – will be studied exactly on the same measurements at the same points in time can add precision to the conclusions of this study. This is due to the fact that in this study the control group was tested on only some of the measurements on which the research group was tested.

This study has found that experiencing the NLP BEBP may influence other variables related to internal factors, such as self-image. Contemporary studies tend to use terms such as resilience, durability and even mental sustainability. It is worthwhile to expand the findings of the current study to further studies, which will empirically test the connection between experiencing NLP BEBP and each one of the above-mentioned variables.

Another interesting study could be comparing two emotional support programs, one based on the NLP model and one based on principles taken from classic psychology. As was previously mentioned, one of the main arguments of the psychological community is that NLP cannot be applied in formal institutions due to flaws in proving that it is evidence based. However, NLP practitioners claim this argument is absurd and has no place in a post-modernistic world. A comparison of the application of two such programs on an identical student population can greatly contribute to the promoting of knowledge within this conflict.

Therefore, following the researcher's recommendation to provide teachers with NLP tools, it is recommended to conduct a study which will investigate the teachers' teaching functioning, the students' learning functioning, and the quality of their relationships before, during and after the teachers have been trained in NLP.

V. 5 Contribution to knowledge

The contribution of this study is in helping to fill the gap in knowledge about the influence of an emotional support program based on the NLP model on the academic performance of high school students. In this study, a special program based on the NLP model suited specifically for adolescents was created. The program was tested by a research design based on the paradigm of mixed methods, and it was found that the program has had a wide positive effect on the studied population.

In addition, the study contributes to knowledge by suggesting insights regarding the abilities of the NLP model to serve as a strategic tool for change, improvement and promotion of educational processes among high school students.

The uniqueness of this study is the conceptualization of the experience of the students who participated in the NLP BESP, as well as the elaborate description of a dynamic process which began in identifying the students' difficulties in school, continued through creating a program adjusted to their needs and based on the NLP model, and ending with the application of the program and examining its influence on the students.

This study can contribute to raising the awareness of the differential needs of high school students by members of assisting circle, and to understanding the need to provide tools for those responsible for and trusted with the education of the next generation. The study shows that when these needs receive proper response, the students go through a change in their learning and emotional identity, which facilitates better academic performance.

Research Innovation

The innovation of this study arises from several aspects:

First, the approach to the topic is innovative. There have only been a few studies which referred to NLP as a holistic model, without focusing on one of the tools the model offers. This study tests NLP as a holistic unit which includes a wide variety of concepts, theoretical principles and practical tools. In addition, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, this is the first study conducted in Israel in the field of NLP. The novelty of this study therefore includes putting Israel "on the map" of countries who invest in deepening the knowledge in this field. The innovative holistic approach is also expressed in other parts of this study, such as: combining psychotherapy and education; combining theories, models and previous research findings in the theoretical review; the holistic approach towards the participating student without differentiating between cognitive and emotional components; the unique combination of the studied population (students who participated in the program, their teachers, students in the control group and program moderators); and the types of triangulation used to increase the study's reliability and validity.

Regarding theory, the study combines two theories of common motifs: Care Pedagogy and the theoretical principles of NLP itself, which are called Presuppositions. This original combination can promote a stronger connection between NLP and Education. It also expands the scope of the connection between students' emotional state and their academic performance.

Furthermore, concepts from both theoretical sources were combined. Table 8 presents the parallels between concepts of Care Pedagogy and the NLP model.

One of the main critiques on the NLP model is the lack of academic studies which can serve as empirical evidence for its efficacy. The main argument is that most studies conducted in this field were based on qualitative measures alone. Furthermore, most of them were based on a single case study. Therefore, there is novelty in using mixed methods in this study. The study combined several quantitative research tools – different types of questionnaires, data from the school's database software – as well as several qualitative research tools – interviews and open questionnaires. This new combination was chosen in order to improve the NLP model's likelihood to be integrated and acknowledged academically.

The study also provides innovation in findings analysis. The analysis was based on three sources – existing literature, the researcher's own professional experience, and the study's findings. Four meta-themes were found, which were called axes and included the academic performance axis, the intrapersonal communication axis, the interpersonal communication axis, and the program evaluation axis. The study's findings, analysis, discussion and conclusion were all presented according to these axes.

Another novelty of this study is the way in which the researcher chose to present the graphic figures. The idea was taken from the NLP world, in which symbols are frequently used. This is justified by the belief that symbols are the language of the subconscious. For example, the question: "what is this like?" is very common, directed to the participant as he or she describes a thought or a sensation. Therefore, in this study a symbol was also used to describe different research dynamics – the phone. The phone represented the study's progress, the current world of the adolescents comprising the study population, and the wish to enter their world and work with them from a position of familiarity, not of distance and detachment.

The novelty of the findings lies in the intensity of the students' experiences. Besides being described as "life changing", the influence of the experience is not limited to the student by him/herself, or to achieving the goal he or she set at the beginning of the sessions. The change is perceived as extensive, and of the power to create a chain reaction in various aspects of life. In other words, an improvement in grades might influence the way the student perceives his or her emotional durability and social skills.

Moreover, the study invites the reader to consider the change which takes place during the educational process not only as a linear change, i.e. as a product of accumulating learning opportunities, but also as the ability of key experiences to become turning points in the life of a student.

Nearing the end of writing these lines, the Israeli Ministry of Education published the *Book of Containment*, which discusses the ministry's next goal: "incorporating the learners and promoting them in regular education while expanding the ability to contain them and provide them with a variety of responses" (Shemesh, 2012). The book was published in order to provide educators with practical programs for achieving this goal. The findings of this study can contribute by enriching the concepts and tools which can serve anyone working towards this goal. Educators often act intuitively, and are not aware of the components and characteristics of the relationship with the students which build the containment. The findings may contribute to shaping recommendations for improvement and streamlining of the theory of containment, and to spreading knowledge and insights throughout the education systems.

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