Evaluating the Effectiveness of Snyder's Theory-Based Group Hope Therapy to Improve Self-Efficacy of University Students in Finance

Manwen Tian¹, Shurong Yan¹, Ning Wang²*

ABSTRACT
Self-efficacy as a motivating factor leads to increased academic performance and stress reduction. Therefore, training to improve academic self-efficacy can have a significant effect on students' academic achievement and progress of educational system. The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of the Snyder’s theory-based group hope therapy on academic self-efficacy beliefs and hope in freshman students. In total, 45 freshman students were recruited and randomly assigned to two groups: intervention group and control group. Academic self-efficacy belief was measured with the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, and hope was assessed with the Snyder Hope Scale (SHS). Measurements were assessed before intervention, end of intervention, and at a 2-month follow-up. The sample showed an academic self-efficacy beliefs score of 23.9% at baseline. Freshman students in the intervention group showed significant improvements in their academic self-efficacy beliefs and hope at end of intervention and follow-up, but no in the control group. Students with low self-efficacy benefitted from the intervention. The results of our intervention indicate a significant positive effect on academic self-efficacy beliefs and hope in freshman students, who benefitted from the Snyder’s theory-based group hope therapy. Early self-efficacy detection is therefore crucial in the treatment and care of freshman students, and hope approaches can help to achieve academic achievement during the university period.

Key Words: Group Hope Therapy, Self-Efficacy, Snyder’s Theory, University Students

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Introduction
The concept of self-efficacy has been adapted from the social recognition theory of Albert Bandura, a famous psychologist, who refers to the role of individual beliefs and judgments in ability to perform his duties (Altun et al., 2017; Hajare and More, 2017; Hamad et al., 2018; Kevrekidis et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2018; Taheri et al., 2017). Many of human behaviors are self-excited and controlled by effective mechanisms, which belief in personal self-efficacy is more important and more comprehensive than the rest (Bandura, 1997). On the other hand, self-efficacy, like a cognitive-motivational factor, plays a major role in creating individual and gender differences within the scope of academic performance (Bandura, 2001). The belief in self-efficacy is a major part of self-awareness, therefore, there are four important sources for creating and changing the self-efficacy beliefs system, including successful experience, successor experience, verbal or social persuasion, and emotional-physiological situations (Duan et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2017; Liu, 2018, 2017; Wang et al., 2018; Zong et al., 2018). Some authors believe there is a close relationship between self-efficacy and individual’s performance in delivering assigned duties. Self-efficacy is also an intermediary between knowledge and practice. In education, researchers concluded that self-efficacy plays an important role in utilizing knowledge and professional skills (Zimmerman, 2000).
Self-efficacy gives people motivation and self-confidence so they can effectively solve problems. Nowadays everyone knows the importance of problem-solving skills (Alrowais and Alyousefi, 2017; Al-Shaebi et al., 2018; Dilli et al., 2017; Hussain et al., 2018; Maltese et al., 2017; Shaikh and Guo, 2017). Learners must independently acquire their learning skills and problem solving by approaching higher learning levels, especially higher education, to reduce their dependence on teachers (Boekaerts, 1997). The problem-solving skill of individuals, with their focus on the problem, is a cognitive activity, so improving problem-solving skills through education should be a worthwhile goal (Seminara, 1997). Success is not just a skill, but the promotion of proper skills and the use of it is an important factor in the success of individuals. One of the variables that seems to affect students’ self-efficacy is hope (Davidson et al., 2012; Atanasov et al., 2013; Feldman and Kubota, 2015; Ben-Naim et al., 2017).

Snyder’s research on mental illness and some physical illnesses such as cancer and physical inferiority has shown that many mental illnesses and some physical illness occur in response to loss of hope, and hope therapy can improve mental health and quality of life for the patients (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope therapy is a healthcare program based on Snyder’s hope therapy designed to enhance hopeful thinking and strengthening activities related to pursuit of goal, which is derived from cognitive-behavioral therapies, solution-based treatments and fictional and narrative treatment (Snyder and Peterson, 2000). In this treatment, participants first get acquainted with the principles of the theory of hope therapy and then they are taught how to apply these principles in their lives (Da Silva Soares et al., 2018; Danby et al., 2018; Eglitis and Popov, 2018; Iyit, 2018; Kmita et al., 2018; Moreno-Fernandez et al., 2018; Taki et al., 2018). Participants learn how to determine important, achievable, and measurable goals, set multiple paths to move toward these goals, identify the motivational resources and interactions of each obstacle to its motivation, review progress towards the goal, and adjust the targets and passages as needed (Ahamed et al., 2017; Khosravi et al., 2018; Martinez Macias et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2018). This intervention is carried out in a group because Snyder’s theory assumes that hopeful thinking reflects a transactional process (Snyder et al., 1997). The largest volume of hope-seeking research in recent decades belongs to Snyder and Seligman (2006).

### Study aims and hypotheses
The aim of our study is to investigate the effects of Snyder’s theory-based group hope therapy on the self-efficacy of university students. As previous study has shown that self-efficacy belief may have a positive effect on academic achievement, Snyder’s theory-based group hope therapy is hypothesized to improve academic self-efficacy beliefs. In the present study, the effectiveness of Snyder’s theory-based group hope therapy was tested over time and the association between hope, confidence in ability to do homework in classroom, confidence in ability to do homework in outside classroom, confidence in ability to interact with others in university, and confidence in ability to manage work, family and university was investigated (Aliverti et al., 2017; Bich et al., 2017; Elsadek et al., 2017; Oskay et al., 2017; Salahudeen and Nishtala, 2017; Ujwala and Babu, 2017).

### Methods
#### Sample and study design
A sample of 79 freshman students aged 20-30 years was recruited in two colleges in southern China, from January to November 2014. We recruited participants studying in the colleges via postal addresses; we send an envelope containing information about our study process and goals and a Snyder’s hope scale. We received the information those who were interested to participate in the study. In total 75 freshman students were contacted in the colleges. Of 58 (77.3%) students responded to the hope scale, 45 (60%) were included in the study. Participants randomly assigned to an intervention group (n = 24) and a control group (n = 21).

#### Data collection
We gave all the freshman students participated in this study a self-report questionnaire on hope and academic self-efficacy beliefs. Participants filled out the questionnaire at before and after the intervention, and at an 8-week follow-up. We also received the informed consent to participate. Ethical approval was given by the ethics committee of Hunan University and the Psychology Chamber of Changsha.

Participants in the intervention group received an 8-session Snyder's theory-based
group hope therapy. The treatment protocol is presented in Table 1.

**Results**

**Descriptions**

From the recruited 79 freshman students, 45 students took part in the study. According to Table 2, the gender distribution was 19 male and 26 female freshman students aged between 20 and 30 years, with a mean age of 24.18 (1.33). Most students were female (57.8%) and single (68.9%).

### Table 1. Sessions summary of the treatment protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Session time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Familiarity, expression of goals, and structure of group</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, explaining the main concepts of the hope theory that includes purpose determination, thinking of an agent or will, route thinking or planning and detecting obstacles, and explaining and discussing how to grow hope and its necessity and its impact on self-efficacy.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Necessity of having hope</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, requesting from participants to define their life story on the core of the hope theory, namely, goals, participation of the members in identifying the life story of other members, and summarization and conclusion of contents.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Definition of own life story</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, explaining stories based on three main components of Snyder's hope theory: Goal, agent, and passageways. Work on increasing agent thinking using positive thinking and repeating positive words, and summarization and conclusion of contents.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explaining the story</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, explaining stories based on three main components of Snyder's hope theory: Goal, agent, and passageways. Work on increasing agent thinking using positive thinking and repeating positive words, and summarization and conclusion of contents.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Providing a list of current events</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, familiarity with planning thinking, addressing the planning list, addressing the list of identifying appropriate paths for achieving goals, requesting members to provide a list of current events and different dimensions of their lives and to determine their importance and satisfaction from each of them, and summarization and conclusion of contents.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Suggesting right goals</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, Propagating the Properties of the proper objectives based on Snyder's theory and then persuade people to set goals in each of the areas of life. Understanding how to deal with obstacles and challenges, identifying self-owning thoughts for changing ineffective attitudes, learning to deal with obstacles by creating alternate passages using creativity, and summarization and conclusion of contents.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suggesting suitable trains</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, introducing appropriate passage features and requesting from members to find appropriate solutions to achieve goals set, learn how to break passes into a series of small steps and determine succession passes to the group members, teaching strategies for creativity by enhancing rider’s thinking using gradual planning and will using the techniques imaginary, mental imagery, imitation / modeling and positive sayings, and summarization and conclusion of contents.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conclusion and finalization</td>
<td>Reviewing the contents of the previous session, introducing strategies for creating and maintaining agent, training to members of group to be a hope therapist and to use hopeful thinking on a daily basis (so that they can determine their goals and obstacles, create and maintain the factor necessary to achieve them within themselves and identify the necessary passages), talking about slipping and ways to overcome slipping when dealing with obstacles, applying hopeful thinking in everyday life, briefing and summarizing the contents, post-test, thanks for the group members and goodbye.</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Sociodemographic features of the freshman students for before and after the intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Pre-intervention (N = 45)</th>
<th>Post-intervention (N = 41)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, M, SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hope family and university
Confidence outside classroom

Table 3. Summary of confidence for academic self-efficacy beliefs and hope scores for intervention and control groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Intervention group (n = 24)</th>
<th>Control group (n = 21)</th>
<th>F, p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-intervention</td>
<td>End of intervention</td>
<td>Follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in ability to do homework in classroom</td>
<td>15.34 (2.29)</td>
<td>23.18 (3.16)</td>
<td>28.39 (2.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in ability to do homework in outside classroom</td>
<td>10.23 (2.42)</td>
<td>16.28 (2.51)</td>
<td>25.33 (2.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in ability to interact with others in university</td>
<td>11.18 (3.29)</td>
<td>15.44 (3.24)</td>
<td>21.25 (3.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in ability to manage work, family and university</td>
<td>9.39 (4.23)</td>
<td>16.78 (4.36)</td>
<td>22.05 (4.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>7.37 (2.23)</td>
<td>10.19 (2.08)</td>
<td>12.33 (2.72)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a df = (1, 43)*

Table 3 shows that there were no significant differences on the mean scores of the variables confidence in ability to do homework in classroom, confidence in ability to do homework in outside classroom, confidence in ability to interact with others in university, confidence in ability to manage work, family and university, and hope between the intervention group and the control group at baseline. Students in the intervention group reported significantly greater increases in the variables between pretest and post-test than those in the control group. Furthermore, students in the intervention group showed a significant greater increase the average duration of increases in confidence in ability to do homework in classroom, confidence in ability to do homework in outside classroom, confidence in ability to interact with others in university, confidence in ability to manage work, family and university, and hope over the 2-month follow-up.

Discussion
This study investigated the effects of the Snyder’s theory-based group hope therapy on academic self-efficacy beliefs and hope in Chinese students. The score of academic self-efficacy beliefs was 23.9% at baseline, at which most students were categorized as lack of belief in academic self-efficacy, and they had low levels of hope. The findings showed that therapy-hope in the post-test stage has led to increased self-efficacy and hope. This result support empirical evidences in this field (Sherwin et al., 1992; McBride, 2012; Feldman et al., 2016; Ben-Naim et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that hope is related to the structures of academic success (Snyder et al., 2002), problem-solving ability (Steffen & Smith, 2013), social support (Hagen et al., 2005), positive affection (Rego et al., 2014; Steffen & Smith, 2013), and self-construal (Du & King, 2013).

In general, hope can be considered as a complex cognitive structure, which enables the intuitive processing of information, attention to goals and the ability to transfer attention. In other words, hope is an important source that enables individuals to maintain their confidence in facing barriers and problems (Santilli et al., 2014) and a thinking that confronts negative expectations and makes positive affection (Steffen & Smith, 2013). In this context it is noted that Happiness in ways of thinking strengthens feelings, actions and conflicts with specific goals (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

Bandura (1997) believes that self-efficacy is one of the cognitive processes that makes up many social behaviors and personal characteristics. Self-efficacy is related to the beliefs that learners have assignment problems and the consequences of doing it. Thus, views on education recognize self-efficacy as the beliefs of students in predicting their ability to succeed in learning and study activities (Di Giunta et al., 2013). According to the Bandura’s (1993) opinion, if one believes that he has the ability to succeed and progress, he has achieved a self-efficacy. It has now become clear that self-efficacy levels are low for students who are not prepared to cope with academic challenges (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

As can be seen, hope can provide self-efficacy fields for students because students hoping to achieve academic success have a goal. They know the ways to reach the goal, show greater perseverance against educational obstacles, maintain their positive affection for the academic future, are happy about their quest for education, and a bright future with them. Because of this, if they fail, they will start their efforts again, believe their abilities, and aware that wins the challenges ahead. So we can say that hopeful students are self-efficacy.


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