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Teachers as Leaders: The Impact of Adler-Dreikurs Classroom Management Techniques on Students' Perceptions of the Classroom Environment and on Academic Achievement

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Teachers as Leaders: The Impact of Adler-Dreikurs Classroom Management Techniques on Students’ Perceptions of the Classroom Environment and on Academic Achievement

Fariba Soheili, Hamid Alizadeh, Jason M. Murphy, Hossein Salimi Bajestani, and Eva Dreikurs Ferguson

Abstract

In response to growing interest in universal school-based interventions, we taught Adlerian-Dreikursian classroom management techniques to teachers and investigated how these techniques impacted both the students’ perception of the classroom environment and the students’ grades. A quasi-experimental design with pretest and posttest control groups was employed. The sample consisted of 30 Iranian elementary school female teachers and 745 students (407 girls, 338 boys) aged 7 to 12 years. The 30 teachers were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The teachers in the experimental group received Adlerian-Dreikursian classroom management training in 10 two-hour sessions. Students were assessed using the My Classroom Scale (Burnett, 2002). Analyses revealed that students’ perceptions of “satisfaction with the classroom environment” and “relationships with teacher,” as well as their academic achievements, were enhanced in the experimental group for all grade levels. We show that Adlerian-Dreikursian classroom methods can improve classroom effectiveness by increasing students’ satisfaction and academic achievement.

Keywords: Individual Psychology, Dreikurs approach, Classroom Management

Educational systems employ various methodologies to promote successful student learning and development. Recently, an interest in universal interventions—those that can be applied to the entire student body to promote positive youth development and enhance academic achievement—has emerged in the literature (e.g., Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). As Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger (2013) note in their meta-analysis of 213 such programs, properly trained classroom teachers are well-suited to administer such interventions. One such teacher-administered intervention is an Adlerian-Dreikursian method in which teachers learn and apply democratic principles and techniques (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1999). An examination of this methodology applied in Iranian classrooms is the focus of the present study.

Because students spend much time in the classroom environment, this setting exerts considerable influence over their attitudes and behaviors
(DiLalla & Mullineaux, 2008). For Dreikurs (Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004), the classroom is not only a setting that provides academic learning but it is an arena in which personality, beliefs concerning one’s self-esteem, and values and beliefs about human relationships are constructed. Others, like Korkmaz and Gümüşeli (2013), have also pointed out that students and teachers establish relationships and experience community rules in a microcosm of the larger world. The classroom environment is comprised of both physical and psychological environments, and the psychological environment, which includes the classroom atmosphere and community climate, has been found to have a major influence on what students learn and achieve (Anderson, 1991).

The psychological environment involves students’ perceptions of the classroom environment. Students bring their past experiences and concepts with them to school (Dreikurs et al., 1999) and thus have different and idiosyncratic phenomenological reactions to what appears to be a common objective environment. For instance, one student may experience a classroom as warm and encouraging, while another experiences it as cold and discouraging (Anderson, 1991). According to Baek and Choi (2002), the use of students’ perceptions while assessing a classroom environment is rooted in Lewin’s (1936) Field Theory and Murray’s (1938) Needs-Press Model, which stated that behavior is a function of reciprocal interactions between a person, such as a student, and an environment, such as a classroom. Indeed, students’ perceptions of the classroom environment have a great effect on their academic achievement, satisfaction, and self-regulated learning (Baek & Choi, 2002; Haertel, Walberg, & Haertel, 1981; Persad, 1980; Sunger & Gunngoren, 2009).

Birch and Ladd (1997) identified a positive student-teacher relationship as an important aspect of a positive classroom environment. According to Pianta (1999), “Relationships with teachers are an essential part of the classroom experience for all children and a potential resource for improving developmental outcomes” (p. 21). Such relationships are defined by two types of attributes: conditions, including frequent exchanges, knowledge of student abilities and interests, high expectations, and caring; and results, including trust and emotional bonds (Pieratt, 2011). Leitão and Waugh (2007) summarize these attributes, stating, “Positive teacher-student relationships are characterized by mutual acceptance, understanding, warmth, closeness, trust, respect, care, and cooperation” (p. 3).

Positive student-teacher relationships lead to positive social and academic performance in students (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The quality of the relationship is associated with students’ school adjustment (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001), socioemotional functioning (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007), behavior problems (Hamre & Pianta, 2001), and school engagement and achievement (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort,
2011). Specifically, Durlak et al. (2013) found an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement in students receiving formal, teacher-administered interventions.

Classroom environment and the relationship between teachers and students are two important aspects of classroom management (Kavıkgöz, 2009; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Classroom management consists of all actions that teachers use to establish an effective, secure, and encouraging learning environment (Brophy, 1986; Djigić & Stojiljković, 2012). Effective classroom management has a significant impact on student achievement and learning (Adyemo, 2012; Wang, Hartel, & Walberg, 1993). In the model proposed by Wolfgang and Glickman (1986), the teacher's approach is classified into one of three styles: non-interventionist, interventionist, or interactionist. The non-interventionist believes that students have inner drives to accomplish and express themselves; as such, the teacher allows students to be self-directive. Interventionists, by contrast, believe that students are affected by the environment, including people and objects; such teachers exert a high degree of control over classroom activities (Yaşar, 2008). Falling between the non-interventionist and interventionist approaches, an interactionist focuses on mutual influence between the student and the teacher; teachers and students have a joint responsibility in classroom activities (Djigić & Stojiljković, 2011). These three styles resemble those described by Dreikurs (1957), who integrated the work of Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) into his Adlerian formulations. These styles are labeled by Lewin et al. (1939) and Dreikurs et al. (1999) as: Laissez Faire, which involves leadership with freedom but not order; Autocratic, which involves leadership with order but not freedom; and Democratic, which involves both order and freedom.

According to Dreikurs et al. (2004), mistakes in human relationships are due to mistaken beliefs and goals, and these can be corrected by applying the principles of democratic relationships and mutual respect. Classroom management interventions based on Adlerian-Dreikursian techniques in countless case studies have been found to affect feelings of equality and promote achievement and redirected goals. This approach, of course, requires an understanding of the child's goals (Alizadeh & Sajjadi, 2010). In a democratic classroom, students experience cooperation, freedom, and responsibility that are shared with the teacher (Waterman, 2007). Democratic teachers utilize encouragement to convey to students that the teacher respects them regardless of their present lack of skills (Dreikurs et al., 2004). Research has shown the importance of such democratic relationships on noncompliant behavior, classroom climate, and school achievement (Djigić & Stojiljković, 2011; Overton & Sullivan, 2008). One strategy for establishing democratic relationships in the classroom is a teacher's use of logical consequences. Logical consequences are consequences that are directly
related to and follow from a student's misbehavior. They include a choice of consequence, and their purpose and rationale is discussed with the student (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968). Albert (1996) identified five elements of logical consequences: They must be related, reasonable, respectful, reliably enforced, and revealed.

Dreikurs identified the teacher as a group leader and recommended group discussion as a means for establishing the spirit of democracy in the classroom. He pointed out that peer groups have a great impact on children, and teachers can use this source of influence by holding group discussions for developing democratic interpersonal relationships and mutual respect (Dreikurs et al., 1999). Adler (1939), as well as Dreikurs and Grey (1968), believed that respect for the individual and the community must blend together. In turn, Anderson (1991) identified mutual respect as one of 15 classroom dimensions associated with powerful learning environments. By focusing on mutual respect, teachers can establish and promote democratic relationships in the classroom. In a respectful classroom environment, students feel secure. They are ready to share and accept each other's ideas and values, and they feel a sense of community (Miller & Pedro, 2006).

Dreikurs (Dreikurs et al., 1999) described teachers as leaders and, as already stated, followed the model of Kurt Lewin (Lewin et al., 1939). The model's three leadership styles, of autocratic, democratic, and laissez faire, were also the basis of Baumrind's (1971) categories. There is similarity between the classification system of Dreikurs (1957) and Wolfgang's (1995) model. Like an interventionist teacher, an autocratic teacher motivates students with outside stimuli to force student compliance and completion of work. Similar to a noninterventionist, a laissez faire teacher exerts a low degree of control over students' activities. Paralleling interactionists, democratic teachers seek to promote intrinsic motivation by combining firmness and kindness to maintain order while also allowing students to participate in classroom decisions (Dreikurs et al., 1999, 2004). To accomplish this democratic ideal, Dreikurs introduced applied methods and techniques to reeducate students and teachers. Ferguson (2001) believed many teachers and parents still do not understand the value of democratic human relationships, and data as well as case materials "illustrate the ineffectiveness of autocratic rule and laissez-faire disorder" (p. 331).

In the present study, we examined the effect of teacher-administered Adlerian-Dreikursian classroom management techniques on students' perceptions of the classroom environment and on academic achievement. The effective results of the Adlerian-Dreikursian approach in the classroom have been widely reported in descriptive publications but, to date, have not been reported using a large empirical study. To our knowledge, this is the first systematic, empirical study to test the effectiveness of the Adlerian-Dreikursian
approach in the classroom. It offers the opportunity to evaluate this methodology's potential for use as a universal, school-based intervention. With appropriate experimental and statistical procedures, we are providing data based on a large-scale test of the value of the Adlerian-Dreikursian approach.

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine both students' perceptions of the classroom environment and students' academic achievement after experiencing Adler-Dreikurs classroom management techniques as taught to and administered by their teachers. Guidelines for classroom management, including how to achieve an effective and satisfying classroom environment based on these techniques, were provided to the teachers. A summary is in the Appendix.

Samples, Methods of Training, and Follow-Up Observations

The sample consisted of 30 female elementary school teachers and their respective students (n = 745) in Dehgoian City, Kurdistan, Iran. After getting formal permissions from the City Education Districts, four schools were randomly selected. The schools had 49 teachers, and 30 were selected on the basis of the number of years of work experience. That is, 19 teachers were not used in the study due to their having work experiences of over 10 years. It was deemed important that teachers in both the experimental and control group had teaching experience below 10 years, so the final set of 30 teachers had one to 10 years of teaching experience (M = 6.03, SD = 3.04). The 30 randomly selected teachers were assigned to one of two groups: 15 were assigned to an experimental group, and 15 were assigned to a control group. Teachers in the experimental group received instruction in Adler-Dreikurs classroom management techniques via a program developed by the researchers and delivered across 10 two-hour sessions in a twice weekly format. This modality is consistent with the broadly accepted approach that effective training programs use sequenced modules with step-by-step training that incorporates active learning, allows time for skill development, and has explicit learning goals (Durlak et al., 2013). Teachers in the experimental condition were asked not to speak about their Adler-Dreikurs training with their counterparts in the control condition over the course of the study.

The four elementary schools had two shifts (i.e., morning school, afternoon school). Teachers and their respective students were randomly assigned to the experimental or control groups. The mean age of the teachers was 31.6 years (SD = 3.89) in the experimental group and 29.8 years (SD = 3.72) in the control group. The student sample consisted of 407 girls and
338 boys enrolled in first through fifth grade, with ages ranging from 7 to 12 years old ($M = 9.30$, $SD = 1.42$). Approximately half (50.3%) were in the experimental group, and 49.7% were in the control group.

No training occurred for the control group teachers, who did what they normally do in their classroom management. Training for the experimental group teachers was begun in February 2013 and lasted five weeks, with two sessions per week. Training was done after school, after students went home. The sessions were in a classroom in one of the schools, and training consisted of lectures, PowerPoint presentations, group discussions, and handouts. The teachers were given the Persian translations of *Discipline without Tears* (Dreikurs et al., 2004), and *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom* (Dreikurs et al., 1999). The teachers were to read these books and discuss them during the training sessions. The first author, who had learned Adler-Dreikurs theory and methods under the supervision of the second author, conducted all training. Following the training, the pretests were given to the students, and the research was completed at the end of May 2013.

Following the training and pretests, the experimental group teachers were monitored and observed by the first author, as well as an experienced senior teacher selected by the first author. The experimental teachers were randomly observed in their classrooms. Additionally, any questions that the teachers had were discussed, and throughout the study they were engaged and involved in applying the Adler-Dreikurs methods and principles.

None of the teachers, neither experimental nor control group, had any rewards for being in the study. None of the teachers were evaluated by the school administration in terms of what grades or scores the children received, and scores on the students’ phenomenological evaluations of the classroom were kept anonymously. Thus, none of the teachers had concerns, or reasons to be concerned, about the outcome measures reported in this study. It is important to note that none of the experimental or control group teachers had external incentives regarding their teaching procedures and the outcome measures.

**Pretest and Posttest Measurements**

Two kinds of measures were obtained. One assessed the students’ perceptions of the classroom environment and thus represented their phenomenological impressions. Another was the grades students normally receive at the end of a term. In Iran’s elementary schools, student achievement is measured according to grades assigned by teachers and not by standardized tests. Grades given by teachers were thus used in the present study to assess the students’ achievement.

The *My Classroom Scale* (MCS; Burnett, 2002) was used to assess students’ perceptions of the classroom environment. This test consists of
10 items, each rated on a five point Likert scale. The first five items measure students' satisfaction with the classroom environment and the final five items measure students' relationships with their teachers. Items addressing the classroom environment included statements such as, "In my classroom, I feel really important," and, "I am really happy in my classroom." Items addressing the teacher-student relationships included statements such as, "I get on really well with my teacher," and, "My teacher really encourages me." The questionnaire was translated from English to Persian. A backward translation was then conducted by two separate translators to assess the validity of the Persian version. The MCS had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.

The students of the 30 selected teachers answered the My Classroom Scale twice, both before and after the teacher training intervention. If students had difficulty reading an item, the teachers read the item to the student.

Student achievement scores in six courses were collected before and after the intervention. Because in Iran's elementary schools the student grades are generally recorded twice per year and the study intervention was administered over the second half of the school year, student grades for the first term provided the pretest data and students' second academic term grades of the 2012–2013 school year provided the posttest data.

The scores of students' performance in the following six courses were recorded before and after the intervention: Reading, Spelling, Writing, Mathematics, Sciences, and Art. Iranian primary students' performance is rated using a numeric system in which More Effort Needed = 1, Acceptable = 2, Good = 3, and Very Good = 4.

Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 18.0. Both analyses of covariances (ANCOVAs) and change scores were used to test the effects of the experimental intervention. For both kinds of statistical analyses, the results showed significant benefits from the Adler-Dreikurs intervention. For all grade levels combined, pretest and posttest satisfaction scores are presented in Table 1.

Because of violation of the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes, instead of ANCOVAs, change scores with one-way multivariate analyses of variances (MANOVAs) were used to examine the effects of the Adler-Dreikurs method of classroom management on students' perceptions of the classroom environment and their academic performance, respectively.

To assess student perception of the classroom environment, two change scores were used: the difference between students' MCS satisfaction with the classroom environment subscale scores after and before the intervention, and the difference between students' MCS relationships with teachers
Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Pre and Postintervention MCS Scale Scores across All Grade Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MCS Scale</th>
<th>Experimental Group (n = 375)</th>
<th>Control Group (n = 370)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre M</td>
<td>Pre SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' satisfaction with classroom environment</td>
<td>12.09</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' relationship with teachers</td>
<td>12.31</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. MCS = My Classroom Scale. The Experimental Group received the Adlers-Dreikurs classroom management program intervention.
subscale scores after and before the intervention. Academic performance was assessed using change scores in reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, science, and art (the difference between postintervention and preintervention numeric semester grades). Additionally, eight independent sample t-tests (not reported) were conducted to examine the impact of the Adler-Dreikurs program on change scores for the eight dependent variables (two MCS scales, six academic subject grades). Each was significant beyond the $p < .01$ level, with higher scores consistently obtained by the students who received the experimental intervention compared to the control group students.

**Effect of Classroom Management Training Program on Students’ Satisfaction with the Classroom Environment and on Students’ Relationships with Their Teachers**

A one-way MANOVA was conducted on the two dependent variables: students’ satisfaction with the classroom environment and students’ relationships with their teachers. Across all grade levels, change score means for student satisfaction were $7.53$ ($SD = 3.73$) for the experimental group and $-.23$ ($SD = 1.26$) for the control group, where a positive change score indicates more satisfaction. Change score means for student relationships across all grade levels were $7.71$ ($SD = 3.79$) for the experimental group and $-.72$ ($SD = 1.35$) for the control group.

Separate analyses for each individual grade, from first to fifth, showed that the differences were significant for each grade. Of interest is the fact that in first grade the satisfaction on the two MCS subscales on both pretest and posttest was high for both experimental and control group students, although the experimental group’s posttest had improved significantly more than the control group’s posttest. In contrast to the first graders, the older grade children had less satisfaction on the pretest subscales.

In summary, for each grade and for all grades combined, the experimental group students had significant improvement in satisfaction on the posttests. A significant difference was found between the experimental Adler-Dreikurs treatment group and the control group, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .28$, $F(2, 742) = 940.72$, $p < .01$. The multivariate $\eta^2$ based on Wilks’ $\Lambda$ was quite strong, $72$. Analyses of variances (ANOVAs) on the dependent variables were conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. Using the Bonferroni method, each ANOVA was tested at the .025 level. The ANOVA on student satisfaction change score was significant, $F(1, 743) = 1436.59$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .66$, as was the ANOVA on student relationship change score $F(1, 743) = 1624.62$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .69$.

Classroom satisfaction scores from the MCS were compared across the two group types (experimental, control) for the possible effect of students’
### Table 2
Covariance Analysis of Experimental and Control Groups after Controlling for Students’ Educational Grade—Students’ Satisfaction with the Classroom Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect Size</th>
<th>Statistical Power</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10088.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10088.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between group variance</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7109.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7109.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational grades</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>112.10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>112.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational grades and group</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>309.56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>309.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .01, **p > .05

### Table 3
Covariance Analysis of Experimental and Control Groups after Controlling for Students’ Educational Grade—Students’ Relationship with Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect Size</th>
<th>Statistical Power</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10762.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10762.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between group variance</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>8182.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8182.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational grades</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>112.80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational grades and group</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>344.14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>86.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .01, **p > .05

educational grade level. The group types variable was significant \( F = 103.07, p < .01 \), as was the educational grade variable \( F = .36, p > .05 \). The interaction of educational grade and group types \( F = 2.62, p > .05 \) was not significant (see Table 2).
Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of Pre and Postintervention Academic Grade Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Subject</th>
<th>Experimental Group (n = 375)</th>
<th>Control Group (n = 370)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Experimental Group received the Adler-Dreikurs classroom management program. Iranian primary students’ performance is rated using a numeric system in which More Effort Needed = 1, Acceptable = 2, Good = 3, and Very Good = 4.

For students’ relationships with their teachers, differences between the experimental and control groups were significant (F = 107.42, p < .05), but students’ educational grade level was not (F = .32, p > .05), nor was the interaction between educational grade and groups (F = 4.66, p > .05). See Table 3.

Effect of Classroom Management Training Program on Students’ Academic Achievement

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the Adler-Dreikurs program on students’ academic grades in six subjects: reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, science, and art. Pre and postintervention score descriptive statistics by academic subject and program type are presented in Table 4. A significant difference was found between the experimental and the control groups, Wilks’ Λ = .37, F(6, 738) = 207.33, p < .01. The multivariate η² based on Wilks’ Λ was quite strong, .63. ANOVAs on the six dependent variables were conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. Using the Bonferroni method, each ANOVA was tested at the .008 level. The ANOVAs were significant at the p < .008 level for each of
Table 5
ANOVA Results by Academic Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Subject</th>
<th>Experimental Group Change Score</th>
<th>Control Group Change Score</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F(1, 743)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>572.16</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>715.45</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>628.34</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>386.61</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>296.56</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>123.33</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Experimental Group received the Adler-Dreikurs classroom management program.

The six subjects (see Table 5): reading (F = 572.16), spelling (F = 715.45), writing (F = 628.34), mathematics (F = 386.61), science (F = 296.46), and art (F = 123.33).

Discussion

As seen in the results, teachers' classroom management techniques based on the Adler-Dreikurs approach had positive effects on students' satisfaction with the classroom environment, their relationships with teachers, and their graded academic attainments. The results with elementary school students were congruent with what Adler (1930) and Dreikurs (1957) would have predicted. When students experience school as a supportive, democratic, and encouraging environment, they have greater satisfaction with school and with their teachers, and they improve more in their academic attainment than do students who have the usual classroom experiences. Students in the experimental group showed greater positive changes in satisfaction with the classroom environment and relationships with their teachers than the control group students, and they had more grade improvement than did the control group who did not receive the intervention.

Dreikurs showed the need for a democratic classroom management and child training style. This style improved both the quality of the classroom experience and the mental health of the children. He proposed that
democracy in the classroom provides the necessary foundation for students to feel belonging and adequacy. Lew and Bettner (1996) showed that children have four important needs that are labeled as the "crucial C's": the need to feel connected, to feel capable, to count (that is, to have value), and to have courage. Teachers who employ Dreikursian techniques assist students in navigating these needs. For example, when teachers encourage students, the students feel capable to complete their homework and other school tasks. When mutual respect is established in the classroom, students feel physically and emotionally safe (Wessler, 2003). According to Ferguson (2001), "Democratic human relationships allow for mutual respect to be translated into actions that enhance the welfare of individuals as well as the group" (p. 330). Teachers in a democratic classroom share the responsibility of learning with their students, building students' confidence, and creating a respectful, cooperative learning environment. In such a classroom, students feel belonging, importance, freedom, and mutual respect (Djigić & Stojiljković, 2011; Dreikurs et al., 1999, 2004; Waterman, 2007).

By establishing mutual respect and encouraging student engagement, democratic teachers can influence students' perceptions of the psychological environment. By using techniques such as encouragement, logical consequences, and mutual respect, teachers can create a safe and respectful environment in which students experience lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of safety, enjoyment, and belonging. This positive perception has an important effect on students' satisfaction with the classroom environment. The results of the present study lend support to the benefits of Dreikursian teaching and classroom techniques.

Findings from the present study show that in a democratic and encouraging classroom, students have a positive perception of the classroom environment. Burnett (2002) arrived at a similar conclusion. When students have positive relationships with their teachers, they perceive the classroom environment as more satisfying. By using Dreikursian classroom management techniques, teachers can foster warmth, respect, and cooperation. In doing so, students learn from their teachers the qualities of cooperation, responsibility, and democracy (Alizadeh & Sajjadi, 2010). Teachers are models for how children perceive and understand human relationships, and when students see teachers engage in trusting and respectful behavior, the students will reciprocate in kind (Miller & Pedro, 2006).

Based on our findings, the effectiveness of Adler-Dreikurs classroom techniques occurs for all educational grade levels. This finding differs from some research that indicated a greater effect of adults' impact on the development of children when children are younger compared to when they are older (e.g., Roorda et al., 2011). A possible explanation for this is that the desire to feel belonging, to be encouraged, to have freedom with order, to
make choices, and to feel respected, as components of democratic relationships, are valued and sought at all ages. In the case of Dreikursian classroom techniques—which promote these values—teachers can learn to implement such interventions at all age levels, and for effective education, these classroom techniques are recommended for all schools.

That the Adler-Dreikurs techniques had a positive impact on students’ academic achievement in multiple subject areas is not surprising, given the extant body of research supporting the educational achievement benefits of democratic classroom management interventions. Findings from the present study, as well as research reported by others (e.g., Adeyemo, 2012; Djigić & Stojiljković, 2011; Wang et al., 1993), indicate that students in such environments will become more involved, responsible, and participatory.

We recognize that the absence of standardized measures of student achievement is a limitation of this research. However, as previously noted, Iranian public schools do not evaluate students using standardized assessments; rather, academic grades are assigned based on students’ performance in a state-recommended curriculum. Furthermore, the large number of participants desired for the study design, as well as temporal restrictions, precluded inclusion of individually administered achievement tests. As this is the first large-scale examination of an Adler-Dreikurs–based intervention on Iranian students’ perceptions of the classroom environment and academic achievement, it may be fruitful for future research to replicate this methodology with a smaller sample size and the addition of a standardized achievement measure.

Our findings reveal that teachers can benefit from increased awareness of the importance of classroom management styles and methodologies, and students benefit relationally and academically from a universal, school-based intervention based on Adlerian and Dreikursian tenets. By applying the democratic classroom management program utilized in this research, teachers may be able to increase student satisfaction with the classroom environment, build stronger relationships with students, and contribute to more effective student learning.

References


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Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, daughter of Rudolf Dreikurs and author of many research articles and several books, is Professor of Psychology at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Visiting Scholar in the Psychology Department at University of California at Berkeley. Through ICASSI (International Committee of Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes), an organization founded by Rudolf Dreikurs and of which she is co-chairperson, she met Hamid Alizadeh. Via electronic communication they have collaborated for over ten years. She worked with Jason Murphy while he was a graduate research assistant in her lab, prior to his gaining his PhD and subsequently being her colleague.
Appendix

Adlerian-Dreikursian Classroom Management Training Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Techniques and Strategies</th>
<th>Main Session Content</th>
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</table>
| 1       | Teachers discuss group rules.  
Teachers are motivated to be active in the sessions.  
 Teachers are presented with a brochure outlining the content of all sessions. | Group members meet and are introduced to each other.  
The basic concepts of the Adler-Dreikurs approach are presented.  
The importance of teachers in teaching and learning is discussed.  
Relevant books of Adler and Dreikurs are introduced. |
| 2       | Teachers discuss the Adler-Dreikurs classroom management style.  
Teachers determine the management style they have been using in the classroom. | Classroom management styles (autocratic, democratic, laissez faire) are described.  
The "best" style is identified and rationale is discussed. |
| 3       | Teachers remember the characteristics of teachers who influenced them during their school days.  
Teachers determine the extent to which their classroom management styles are democratic.  
Teachers specify which of their management characteristics they would like to change. | The importance of democratic management style is presented.  
Characteristics of a democratic classroom are presented.  
Characteristics of democratic teachers are presented. |
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<th>Session</th>
<th>Techniques and Strategies</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Teachers develop the ability to identify clues of students' mistaken goals and their reactions. Teachers use the four “could it be” questions to confront students with their mistaken goals: Could it be that you want special attention? Could it be that you want your own way and hope to be the boss? Could it be that you want to hurt others as much as you feel hurt by them? Could it be that you want to be left alone? Teachers apply appropriate corrective actions considering the type of misbehavior.</td>
<td>Children’s mistaken goals (attention seeking, power seeking, revenge seeking, failure avoiding) are described. Teachers recognize and determine children’s goals and needs. Teachers discuss how to modify children’s mistaken goals.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers practice utilizing logical consequences in the classroom. Teachers consider the five essential elements of logical consequences: Logical consequences must be related, reasonable, respectful, reliably enforced and revealed. Teachers are made aware that if a logical consequence is not discussed and accepted by a student, it may be viewed as a punishment.</td>
<td>Teachers identify natural and logical consequences. Teachers identify the difference between logical consequences and punishment.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Teachers learn creative ways of encouraging students and how this is different from praise. Teachers learn why they must encourage students rather than praise them. Teachers recall their own experiences from school days and consider if they have ever experienced encouragement. If so, what were the consequences?</td>
<td>Encouragement in the classrooms and its importance are discussed. The difference between encouragement and praise is identified and illustrated.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>According to Dreikurs et al. (1999), the first day of school has a great role in engaging students' participation. Teachers talk about their successful experiences in engaging students in participation. Teachers discuss essential factors to engaging students in participation and cooperation.</td>
<td>The importance of students' engagement in classroom programs is presented. Teachers are presented with methods for engaging students in participation.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Teachers learn the main techniques and skills for managing group discussion. For example, teachers must recognize mistaken goals, be aware of subgroups and bands in class, teach principles of discussions, and encourage students to participate in discussions.</td>
<td>Introduce group discussion and its importance in establishing a democratic classroom. Identify the difference between group discussion and a class meeting. Discuss teacher and student roles in group discussion.</td>
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<td>8 (cont.)</td>
<td>Teachers are asked to have a classroom discussion during the next week. Teachers become aware of the sessions’ process including starting, class preparation, weekly goal setting, and the subject of sessions.</td>
<td>The importance of positive relationships between teachers, students, and students’ parents is discussed. Methods for how teachers can have better relationships with students and their parents are presented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers discuss the main skills necessary to have a better relationship with students and their parents. Teachers discuss which Dreikursian techniques improve teacher-student relationships. Teachers discuss ways to build confidence and parental involvement. Teachers recall the characteristics of their teachers who had positive relationships with them.</td>
<td>Main ideas from the training sessions are reviewed.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Teachers discuss any problems encountered while implementing skills learned from the training. Possible solutions are discussed in the group. The importance of continual use of these skills and techniques is emphasized.</td>
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