



## *Self-Affirmation: A Positive Psychological Approach to Self-Integrity, Self-Control and Academic Stress among Double Jeopardy Students of District Jalandhar, Punjab.*

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### **Abstract**

**Objective:** To assess the effectiveness of a Self-Affirmation Intervention in enhancing Self-Integrity, Self-control, and alleviating Academic stress among students facing the double jeopardy challenge.

**Method:** The study uses self-Integrity scale, self-control scale and stress Inventory on a sample of 64 migrant female students from three government schools in Jalandhar, Punjab, India. Additionally, the self-affirmation intervention program developed by Cohen et al., (2006) (Adapted in Hindi Language) is employed for the Intervention phase.

The study began with a pre-test involving 64 migrant female students. Participants were split into Experimental (Intervention) and Control (no Intervention) groups. After pre-test an Intervention is given to the experimental group. A second Intervention was given to the Experimental group 45 days later, while the Control group had no additional Intervention, followed by post-tests for both groups.

**Results:** The findings indicate that migrant girls in the Experimental group demonstrate elevated levels of self-Integrity and self-control compared to those in the Control group. Furthermore, a significant reduction in academic stress is observed in the Experimental group, while no substantial difference is noted in the Control group.

**Conclusion:** These findings contribute to the needs of vulnerable student populations. The simplicity and cost-effectiveness of the self-affirmation Intervention strategy suggest its potential for widespread adoption across schools without necessitating specialized teacher training.

**Keywords:** Self-Affirmation, Jeopardy, Self-Integrity, Self-Control, and Academic Stress

### **BACKGROUND**

Children go through dramatic physical and psychological changes, and cope with multiple stressors, including the challenge of forming their identity. Students want to think positively of themselves. But the daily stressors of school—tests, grades, peer relations—can threaten their sense of personal adequacy. School can be especially threatening for members of historically marginalized groups such as African Americans and Latino Americans (Steele 2010). They may worry that they could be seen through the lens of a negative stereotype rather than accorded respect and judged on their merits. Race, gender, immigration status, minorities and other group memberships can thus give rise to a repeated threat for



entire groups in academic settings. Achievement of the students in the school might be adversely affected due to several sources of disadvantages, especially gender difference, low Socio-economic status and difference between students with and without local migration background have been researched over the time in many contexts. Studies also highlight that the lower achievement of students with immigrant background compared to native students persists after controlling for key factors like socio-economic status (SES) and language spoken in the family (Gebhardt, Rauch, Mang, Sälzer, & Stanat, 2013; Tarelli, Schwippert, & Stubbe, 2012). However, there is a lacuna in the research regarding addressing the issue of how these sources might affect the performance of the students. Mostly, disadvantages arise from psychological threat to the self can be alleviated with the help of self-affirmation interventions and also to improve academic performance (Lokhande & Müller, 2019). Until now, self-affirmation intervention has proved to be beneficial in specific group differences i.e. performance gap, low self-integrity and academic stress based on gender or migrant background. Policy changes and education reform that eliminate this “threat in the air” are of paramount importance (Steele 2010). Even partial closure of the achievement gap reduction of academic stress would make a large difference in the lives of many children and their families.

The concept of self-control, integral to desirable life outcomes, including academic success, is explored, with interventions like self-affirmation showing promise in improving individuals' self-control (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Tangney et al., 2004). Theoretical frameworks, such as self-affirmation theory, highlight the motivation to uphold self-integrity as a key element in managing stress and maintaining a positive self-image (Steele, 1988; Cohen & Sherman, 2014). The experience of self-threat, akin to a psychological alarm, triggers stress responses that, when chronic, can impair academic performance and well-being (Sapolsky, 2004). Academic stress, arising from various sources, necessitates effective stress management approaches, and self-affirmation has emerged as a potential intervention to forestall debilitating levels of stress (Keough & Markus, 1999; Creswell et al., 2005; Sherman et al., 2009). Additionally, self-integrity, characterized by adherence to strong morals and values, plays a crucial role in navigating academic challenges, and self-affirmation interventions contribute to maintaining self-integrity and reducing academic stress (Wood et al., 2009). The integration of self-affirmation into academic settings presents a promising avenue for enhancing student well-being and academic performance, especially for those facing threats to their self-integrity.

## 1. Double Jeopardy

Double jeopardy means a group of people who belong to two disadvantage groups. As we know, In India socially disadvantaged groups include female, gender, race, caste and minorities. And out of which females who constitute half of the human population are never treated on equal ground in all spheres of human life. They are suppressed, oppressed and marginalized in the matter of sharing the available opportunity for their lives, despite the fact that every woman strives for the development of her family. She is religiously, historically and socially and politically marginalized. Adolescence is the phase of life in which every student is prepared physically, mentally and emotionally to face the challenges of life that lie ahead. whereas, Females with migration are facing more than one disadvantage in their academic life. In this stage their disadvantages may increase the academic pressure on them . Every decision of their life revolves around their gender and migration. According to the double-jeopardy approach (e. g. Almquist, 1975; see Hancock, 2006; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008 for a review) female immigrants should be subject to a double disadvantage because of their membership in two negatively stereotyped social groups. Over the past two decades, a new class of social psychological intervention, known as self-affirmation (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006), has demonstrated promise as a cost-effective strategy that works wonders for marginalized groups that are socially and economically weaker. This intervention



attempts to change how students construe failure, stereotypes, belonging, or other challenges they may encounter in school (Walton, 2014). Numerous studies have been conducted on the efficacy of self-affirmation for ethnic minorities and migrants in the U.S. educational context (e.g. Borman et al., 2016; Bowen et al., 2013; Sherman et al., 2013), in Europe (de Jong et al., 2016; Woolf et al., 2009), and for women (Kinias & Sim, 2016; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2006). The self-affirmation process can be promoted by many experiences, such as a teacher's positive feedback or a student's positive relationships. One powerful and self-generated source of self-affirmation is reflecting on core personal values. Numerous studies demonstrate that the brief act of writing about important values can lessen psychological threat and reduce stress in stressful situations.

## 1.2 Self Affirmation Theory

Claude Steele first proposed the Self-affirmation theory in (1988). Self-affirmation theory is a psychological theory that focuses on how individuals adapt to information or experiences that are threatening to their self-concept. It asserts that the overall goal of the self-system is to protect an image of its self-integrity, of its moral and adaptive adequacy. When this image of self integrity is threatened, people respond in such a way as to restore self-worth. It remains a well-studied theory in social psychological research.

Steele purported that the self is made up of different domains: roles, values, and belief systems. Roles include responsibilities a person has, such as being a parent, friend, student, or professional. Values are aspirations people live in accordance to, including things like living healthfully and treating others with respect. Belief systems include the ideologies to which a person ascribes, such as religious or political beliefs. Self-integrity can take many forms. Instead of having one self-concept (e.g., I am a good parent), self-affirmation theory posits that individuals flexibly define who they are using various roles (e.g., I am a good parent, child, and worker). Having a flexible sense of self allows individuals to offset weaknesses in one domain, by highlighting the strengths in another domain. That is, if someone perceives a threat to one domain, he or she can accommodate this threat by upholding a value in another domain. Self-affirmations can come from many sources. Having a flexible self-concept allows people to adapt in the face of threat. Secondly, self-affirmation theory argues that maintaining self-identity is not about being exceptional, perfect, or excellent (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Rather, we just need to be competent and adequate in different areas that we personally value in order to be moral, flexible, and good (Steele, 1988). Self-affirmation theory has proved to be useful for understanding and addressing inequalities in educational outcomes, particularly academic performance, Immigrants and the gender difference (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988). The key tenet of the theory posits that people have a need to see themselves as a good and adequate person; as having "self-integrity" (Steele, 1988, p 262).

Experimental investigations of self-affirmation theory suggest that self-affirmation can help individuals cope with threat or stress and that it might be beneficial for improving academic stress, performance, health, and reducing defensiveness. Self-affirmation theory takes a look at how people maintain self-integrity when this perception of themselves is threatened. In other words, the theory looks to understand how people adjust to stay feeling "good" or "virtuous" when some message or event challenges that belief. However, social psychological research demonstrates the potential for brief interventions to have lasting benefits (Cohen & Garcia 2008, Garcia & Cohen 2012, Walton & Cohen 2011, Wilson 2011, Yeager & Walton 2011). These interventions help people to adapt to long-term challenges. For example, a series of 10-minute self-affirming exercises, which prompt people to write about core personal values, raised migrant student achievement in public schools, with effects that persisted for years (Cohen et al. 2006, 2009; Sherman et al. 2013). The first set of randomized field experiments tested the effectiveness of values affirmation in lifting the achievement of African Americans and Latino Americans is conducted by



(Cohen et al. 2006, 2009)(Sherman et al. 2013; for additional published replications, see Bowen et al. 2012, Harackiewicz et al. 2014, Miyake et al. 2010, Woolf et al. 2009). The research took place at three middle schools with students in early adolescence, a key transition marked by feelings of inadequacy and a quest for identity. Too many adolescents take a wrong turn and find themselves ensnared in negative trajectories with lifelong consequences (Eccles et al. 1991, Moffitt et al. 2011). The schools were racially mixed such that roughly half the students were migrants, that is, African American or Latino American depending on the school, and roughly half were white. Although the schools were located in middle-class neighborhoods, most migrant students at one site came from socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Sherman et al. 2013, study 1), an important population given the widening socioeconomic gap in achievement (Reardon 2011).

In short, after self affirmation intervention students may feel less stressed and perform better on the next classroom test, and performing better, the student may feel more affirmed, in a recursive process that lifts the student's trajectory and eventually becomes a continual source of self-affirmation. Affirmation interventions can trigger a series of reciprocally reinforcing interactions between the self-system and the social system that foster students' adaptive potential over time.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the effect of self-affirmation Intervention on Self-Integrity among Double jeopardy Middle school students.
2. To evaluate the effect of self-affirmation Intervention on Self-Control among Double jeopardy Middle school students.
3. To evaluate the effect of self-affirmation Intervention on Academic Stress among Double jeopardy Middle school students.

## METHOD

Using an experimental study design, we tested the effect of self-affirmation on self-Integrity, Self-control and Academic-Stress among migrant females studying in Government schools of District Jalandhar (Punjab).The researcher conducted a field survey and selected 10 Government schools. Among these schools, a total of 119 migrant students were enrolled in the 8th class. Out of 10 schools, the researcher chooses three schools with less than 50% of migrant students studying in 8<sup>th</sup> class. In total, 64 migrant girls were selected from these 03 Government schools to participate in the experimental study.

## PROCEDURE

The researcher conduct a pre-test by administering self-control scale developed by Tangney et al., (2004), self-Integrity scale developed by Sherman et. al., (2005) and Academic stress Inventory scale developed by Seema Rani and Basant Bahadur Singh (2005) (adapted in Hindi language) to divide the 64 Migrant girls in 02 groups i.e. Experimental group and a Control group. The experimental group comprised of 33 girls, while the control group had 31 girls. Subsequently, a self-affirmation intervention developed by Cohen et. al., (2006) adopted in Hindi language was administered to the experimental group, while no intervention was provided to the control group. Self-affirmation intervention include 14 values and students were asked to choose 2 most important values of their life and write an essay about why these values are important to them and what they will do in future for these values. Following a 45-day gap, the Experimental group received the intervention again, whereas the Control group continued without any Intervention. After one week, a post-test was conducted for both the groups, which include same scales used in pre-test.



## STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

Descriptive analysis

T-test

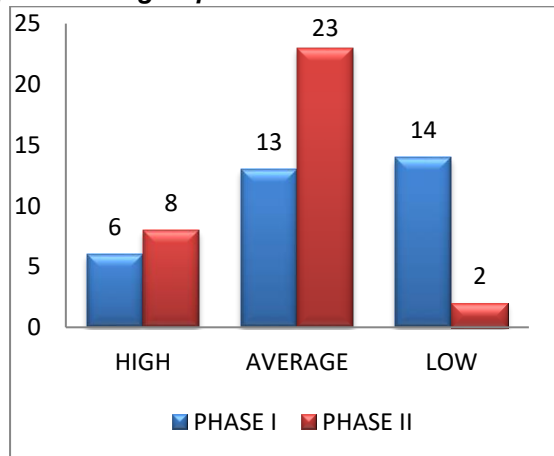
### Result and Discussion

The finding of the result regarding the Self-Integrity, Self-control and Academic stress among migrant female students discussed under the following headings;

1. **The first objective of the study is “to evaluate the effect of self-affirmation Intervention on Self-Integrity among Double jeopardy Middle school students.**

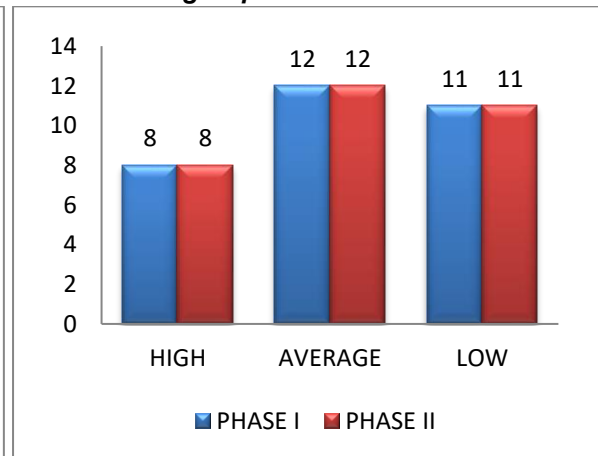
2.

#### Experimental group



**Figure 1** Level of Self-Integrity among Experimental Group

#### Control group



**Figure 1.2** Level of Self-Integrity among control Group

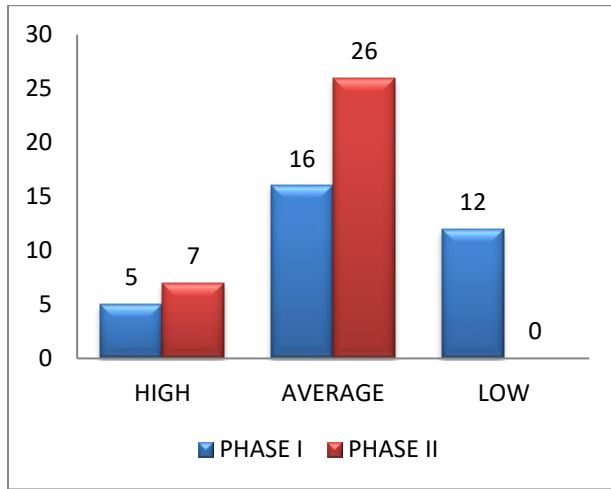
In Figure 1, the Experimental group data reveals noteworthy shifts among migrant female student during Phase I and Phase II. Specifically, students in the High level category exhibit an increase from 6 to 8, indicating a positive trend and improvement within this subgroup. Simultaneously, the Average category experiences a substantial increase from 13 to 23, reflecting significant positive changes. Conversely, the Low level category shows a significant decrease from 14 to 2, implying improvement within this subgroup. Whereas, in figure 1.2, the control group data does not show any change in students' self-integrity during phase I and phase II.

Thus, participation in the Intervention program appears to bring about notable changes in self-Integrity among migrant females of experimental group.

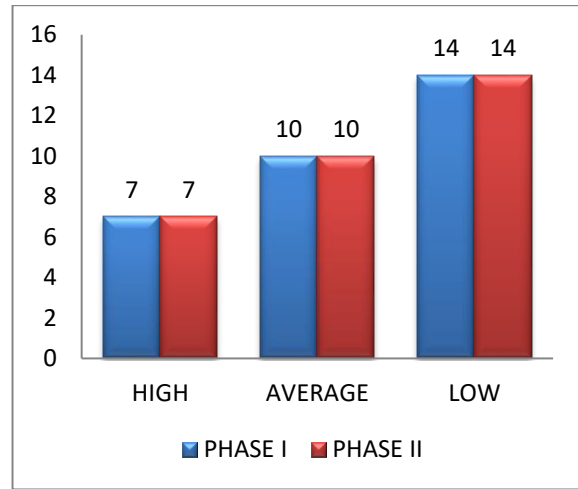
2. **To evaluate the effect of self-affirmation Intervention on Self-Control among Double jeopardy Middle school students**

#### Experimental group

#### Control Group



**Figure 2** level of Self-Control among experimental Group control Group

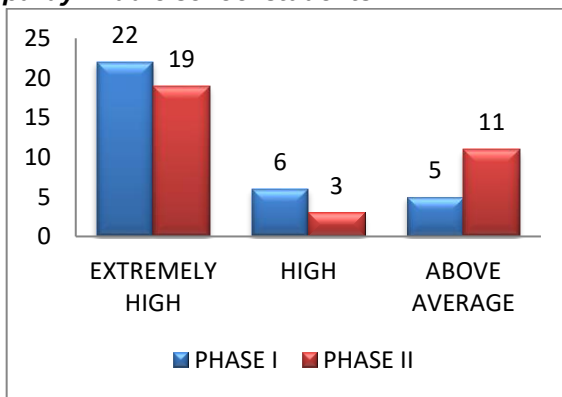


**Figure 2.1** level of Self-Control among control Group

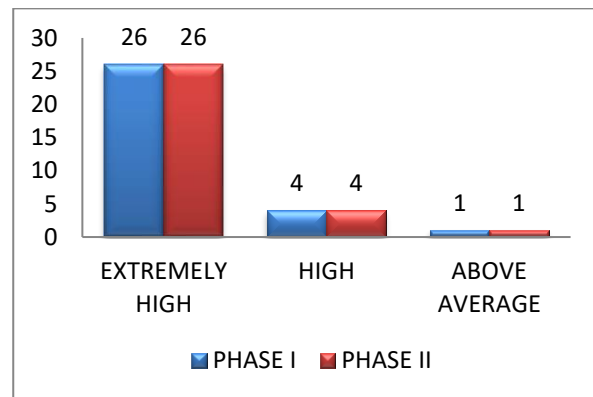
In Figure 2, the experimental group data reveals that the high category sees a rise from 5 to 7 between Phase I and Phase II, implying a favorable enhancement in self-control within this group. Meanwhile, the average category displays a considerable increase from 16 to 26, signifying a significant positive shift and noteworthy improvement in self-control for migrant females in this category. In contrast, the low category undergoes a notable decrease from 12 to 0, indicating a substantial positive change and suggesting a noteworthy improvement in self-control within this low category. Whereas, figure 2.1 shows that, the stability observed across all categories of control group (high, average, low) indicates that self-control levels have remained constant from Phase I to Phase II.

Thus, participation in the Intervention program appears to bring about notable changes in self-Control among migrant females of Experimental group.

**3. To evaluate the effect of self-affirmation Intervention on Academic Stress among Double jeopardy Middle school students**



**Figure 3** level of Academic stress among experimental Group



**Figure 3.1** level of Academic stress among control Group

Figure 3 reveal noteworthy shifts in stress levels among participants. Notably, the extremely high category witnessed a positive change, with a decrease from 22 to 19 in Phase II, signifying a reduction in academic stress. Similarly, the high category experienced a significant decrease from 6 to 3, indicating a significant alleviation of stress within this group. On the contrary, the above average category showed a significant increase from 5 to 11, students from extremely high and high shifted to above average category of stress, suggesting a positive shift and improvement in stress management within this particular range. Whereas, figure 3.1 shows that, the Control group maintains consistent values in both phases. This stability implies



that stress levels within these categories have not undergone significant changes during the observed period.

Thus, decrease in the academic stress of Experimental group, emphasize the effectiveness of self-affirmation intervention.

**Table 01. Descriptive statistics of total students in Experimental and Control group**

VARIABLES		EXPERIMENTAL GROUP		CONTROL GROUP	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
SELF-INTEGRITY	Pre-test	18.7273	5.35183	20.5484	6.64750
	Post-Test	<b>21.1212</b>	<b>5.36049</b>	20.5484	6.64750
SELF-CONTROL	Pre-test	33.6667	7.32149	33.5161	8.93633
	Post-Test	<b>37.6061</b>	<b>6.49490</b>	33.5161	8.93633
ACADEMIC-STRESS	Pre-test	113.2424	12.76967	117.2903	9.37441
	Post-Test	<b>106.3939</b>	<b>12.01025</b>	117.2903	9.37441

In the Experimental Group, the mean for self-integrity increases from 18.7273 (Pre-test) to 21.1212 (Post-test), accompanied by a standard deviation of 5.35183 in the Pre-test and 5.36049 in the Post-test. In comparison, the Control Group maintains a consistent mean of 20.5484 with a standard deviation of 6.64750 in both phases. This suggests an improvement in self-integrity within the Experimental Group, while the Control Group remains relatively stable.

For self-control, the Experimental Group shows an increase in mean from 33.6667 (Pre-test) to 37.6061 (Post-test), with standard deviations of 7.32149 and 6.49490, respectively. In contrast, the Control Group maintains a mean of 33.5161 with a consistent standard deviation of 8.93633 across both phases. The Experimental Group's increase indicates an enhancement in self-control, while the Control Group exhibits stability. In academic-stress, the Experimental Group's mean decreases from 113.2424 (Pre-test) to 106.3939 (Post-test), with standard deviations of 12.76967 and 12.01025, respectively. The Control Group maintains a consistent mean of 117.2903 with a standard deviation of 9.37441 across both phases. The Experimental Group's decrease suggests a reduction in academic stress, whereas the Control Group remains relatively constant.

The Experimental Group shows positive changes across self-integrity, self-control, and academic-stress, implying improvements in these variables from pre-test to post-test. The Control Group, on the other hand, demonstrates stability in mean values across all three variables, indicating no significant changes over the observed period.

**Table 2. T-value of Pre-test and Post-test of Experimental group**

VARIABLES	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP			
		T-Value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
SELF-INTEGRITY	PRE-TEST	-12.640	32	.000
	POST-TEST			
SELF-CONTROL	PRE-TEST	-9.515	32	.000
	POST-TEST			
ACADEMIC-	PRE-TEST	12.515	32	.000



## STRESS

## POST-TEST

Table 2 reveals significant findings: The T-value for self-integrity in both pre-test and post-test is -12.640 with 32 degrees of freedom, yielding a highly significant p-value of .000. This indicates a substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, suggesting a significant change in self-integrity within the experimental group.

Similarly, for self-control, the T-value in both pre-test and post-test is -9.515 with 32 degrees of freedom, and the significance level is again highly significant at .000. This suggests a notable difference between pre-test and post-test scores, pointing to a significant change in self-control within the experimental group. Lastly, the T-value for academic-stress in both pre-test and post-test is 12.515 with 32 degrees of freedom, and the significance level is .000, indicating high significance. This suggests a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores for academic stress within the Experimental group. Whereas, in the control group no significant changes have been seen in both the pre-test and post-test scores for self-integrity, self-control and academic stress.

### Discussion

The presented results provide a comprehensive insight into the impact of an Intervention program on self-integrity, self-control, and academic stress among migrant females, with a particular focus on the experimental and control groups. The findings suggest that the Intervention program has brought about significant positive changes in the Experimental group, while the control group has exhibited stability across the observed variables.

The comparison of mean values and standard deviations between the experimental and control groups reaffirms the effectiveness of the Intervention program. Positive changes in self-integrity, self-control, and a decrease in academic stress are evident in the experimental group, while the control group shows stability across the observed variables. The statistical analysis in Table 2 further supports the significance of the observed changes in the experimental group. The highly significant p-values for self-integrity, self-control, and academic stress indicate a substantial difference between pre-test and post-test scores, emphasizing the effectiveness of the Intervention program in bringing about significant improvements. In conclusion, the results suggest that the Intervention program has a positive impact on self-integrity, self-control, and academic stress among migrant females. The Experimental group demonstrates notable improvements, while the control group remains relatively stable. These findings contribute valuable insights into the efficacy of self-affirmation interventions for enhancing well-being and academic performance among migrant female students.

### Implication

The study focuses on double jeopardy middle school students, who are often overlooked in research studies. These students face multiple challenges, including being female and migrant, which can negatively impact their academic life and psychological well-being. Country like India where children still face caste, class and racism issues at every stage of life, Self-affirmation intervention is a zero cost strategies that help them to face these problems and succeed in their academic life. Moreover, self-affirmation is a cost-effective strategy that every teacher can use in the classroom. So, it is possible for every school to use this intervention without giving it second thought. (Cohen, 2006). Overall, the proposed research is innovative and path-breaking in its focus on double jeopardy middle school student. The findings of this study will have important implications for educators and policymakers in designing effective intervention programs for marginalized student.

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**&**  
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