

Validity and Reliability of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module for School Truancy

Muhammad Najib Husman @ Othman, Ahmad Jazimin Jusoh*,
Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip

Department of Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Human Development, Universiti
Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Crossponding Author Email: jazimin@fpm.upsi.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/22403> DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/22403

Published Online: 20 September 2024

Abstract

The issue of truancy, which continues to be a significant problem in Malaysian schools, is an important problem that significantly impacts the academic performance and overall development of children. To solve this problem, finding solutions that are both creative and supported by data is essential. This study investigated the effectiveness, validity, and reliability of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) in addressing chronic absenteeism in secondary schools in Malaysia. The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, including the participation of four hundred students. These students included administrators, guidance counselors, and members of both the experimental control group and the control group. Participants were requested to complete questionnaires that gave quantitative data before and after the intervention. On the other hand, respondents were invited to participate in interviews and focus groups to collect qualitative data. It was clear from the findings that the MBKCTRT has a high level of validity and reliability. The student participation rate (0.9 points higher on a 5-point scale) and the attendance rate (18.4% higher) were substantially greater in the experimental group. According to a thematic analysis of qualitative data, self-awareness, goal-setting, communication, and school belonging were the four categories in which students exhibited improvement. MBKCTRT has the potential to be an effective intervention for decreasing absenteeism and boosting holistic student development, according to the findings of the research, which, in turn, has significant implications for educational policy and practice in Malaysia.

Keywords: Truancy Intervention, Choice Theory, Reality Therapy, Student Engagement, Educational Policy, Malaysian Secondary Education, School Counseling, Behavioral Outcomes, Holistic Student Development

Introduction

Because truancy and other types of school absences represent a significant disciplinary issue in educational institutions all over the globe, this fact has been accepted for a considerable amount of time. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Malaysia has, over many years, adopted several programs and regulations in response to the issue of student truancy, which has been identified as a substantial disciplinary problem (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). Despite the many efforts that have been made, students continue to be absent from school, which has a detrimental influence on their academic performance and overall school experience (Cheah et al., 2021).

In 1876, the English government created the Elementary Education Act to address the problem of truancy, which was recognized as a problem that required institutional ways to address. The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) also started addressing this problem in 1994 by introducing circulars and recommendations such as the "*Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bil. 6/1995*" and the Personality Development Program for Students (PPSDM). Both of these programs are designed to help students develop their personalities. Several further expressions of the Ministry of Education's unwavering commitment to combating truancy include the School Disciplinary Board, the Education Development Master Plan (PIPP) 2006–2010, and the Malaysia Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013–2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023).

Chronic absenteeism, often known as truancy, is the subject of study that focuses on a wide range of diverse factors, including those of a social, psychological, and pedagogical nature. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the factors contributing to and influencing truancy. These studies have shown that factors such as family history, peer pressure, the atmosphere of the school, and individual attitudes toward education all have a part (Kearse-McCastler, for example). According to Corey (2013) and Glasser (1999), using psychological theories such as CTRT and Choice Theory has resulted in a better understanding of truancy and developing strategies to treat it.

People behave in ways that will help them realize their most basic objectives, which include things like safety, belonging, autonomy, and happiness, according to William Glasser's Choice Theory, which he developed in the 1990s (Glasser, 1999). Glasser's theory was published in 1999. Reality Therapy is a real-world application of Choice Theory that emphasizes accepting responsibility for one's desires and devising a plan to fulfill those desires without infringing on other people's rights (Glasser, 1965).

According to Jusoh and Hussain (2015), researchers have shown that implementing CTRT-based group guidance modules in various educational contexts has resulted in improvements in both the behavior and involvement of students. According to Jusoh (2016), these therapies provide children with structured support, allowing them to develop their coping mechanisms, decision-making ability, and relationships with instructors and peers.

The fact that the research contributed to the existing body of knowledge on strategies for addressing truancy highlights its significance. As stated by Erford (2014), this research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) in reducing truancy. The findings of this study are intended to give evidence-based insights that have the potential to affect both policy and practice. According to Keng et al. (2024), educators, counselors, and lawmakers may be able to use the findings to develop more specific interventions that will assist children in reaching their full academic potential and reduce the number of students who skip school.

According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2023), the study is on the strategic goals of the MOE under the PPPM 2013–2025. These objectives focus on students' results as well as the holistic development of students' values and character. As a result of proof of the effectiveness of MBKCTRT, this research provides credibility to the Ministry of Education's efforts to create a more organized and conducive environment for learning (Keppens & Spruyt, 2020).

The research conducted has highlighted several critical questions that require further exploration and investigation:

1. What is the level of validity and reliability of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) in addressing truancy among students?
2. How does implementing MBKCTRT influence students' attendance and engagement in school activities?
3. What are the differences in behavioral outcomes between students who participate in MBKCTRT and those who do not?
4. How do students perceive the effectiveness of MBKCTRT in helping them address personal and academic challenges related to truancy?
5. What are the implications of MBKCTRT for future educational policies and practices aimed at reducing truancy?

This research aims to give a full assessment of the MBKCTRT by providing answers to the questions posed, making a significant contribution to educational psychology and guidance counseling.

Literature Review

Validity and Reliability of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT)

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to investigate the effectiveness and reliability of the MBKCTRT Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module in the context of addressing the truancy issue for students. In empirical research, considerable emphasis is placed on robust psychometric procedures to ensure the effectiveness of counseling therapies. According to Erford (2014), students may gain advantages from more efficient treatment modules if systematic evaluation methodologies were used to enhance the modules' credibility and ability to be applied in real-world situations. Through advanced statistical analysis, their study demonstrated that CTRT-based treatments were dependable and valid

across various educational settings. This dedication to rigorous methodology ensures that the interventions are founded on sound scientific principles and have an effect in the contemporary world.

Influence of MBKCTRT on Students' Attendance and Engagement

According to recent research findings, therapies based on CTRT have the potential to improve children's engagement in school activities and attendance significantly. According to Virtanen et al. (2021), group guidance modules that were based on Choice Theory demonstrated an increase in student participation and a reduction in absenteeism when they were implemented in secondary schools. They discovered that children could improve decision-making, coping, and interpersonal connections with structured support networks. These are the three primary reasons why children skip school in the first place. Additionally, Jusoh (2016) used Choice Theory in counseling sessions, and he discovered that students' attendance and academic performance dramatically increased as a result of the usage of this theory. These findings prove that the tailored and empowering approach that CTRT takes makes a difference in the feeling of agency that students have and their capacity to overcome challenges in their academic and personal lives.

Behavioral Outcomes of Students Participating in MBKCTRT

A significant amount of attention in recent research has been paid to the impact that MBKCTRT has on the behavior of students. Jusoh and Hussain (2015) conducted research in various educational settings to determine whether group-leading modules based on Choice Theory were particularly effective. The researchers concluded that these interventions could significantly improve students' behavior and engagement. Creating a supportive environment where children may develop their coping mechanisms and decision-making skills is one of the ways that interventions based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CTRT) can address the behavioral issues that contribute to truancy. This approach is consistent with the findings of Kearse-McCastler (2020), which state that truancy is a complicated issue that calls for interventions that address it from all aspects, including the social, educational, and psychological aspects.

Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of MBKCTRT

To determine whether or not MBKCTRT is effective, it is necessary to understand how students feel about it. According to a case study conducted in Malaysian schools, students who participated in counseling sessions based on CTRT reported improved levels of empowerment and competence in coping with personal and academic challenges (Jusoh, 2016). The fact that this answer is so positive demonstrates how important it is to consider students' perspectives when evaluating the effectiveness of therapeutic procedures. CTRT-based therapies that promote personal responsibility and aid in the construction of specific plans to meet individual needs may have a positive influence on the attitudes that students have toward school and education.

Implications of MBKCTRT for Educational Policies and Practices

The broader implications of MBKCTRT for educational policies and practices are significant. The Malaysia Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 emphasizes holistic student development, cultivating values and character alongside academic achievements (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023). By aligning with these strategic goals, interventions based on CTRT address truancy and contribute to the overall educational objectives set by the Ministry of Education. Rasidi et al. (2020) discussed the evolution of educational policies in Malaysia, highlighting the need for evidence-based interventions that support student well-being and academic success. Integrating CTRT into educational practices provides a framework for developing more effective. These targeted interventions address the root causes of truancy and support students in fulfilling their educational potential.

Methods

Research Design

To conduct an exhaustive investigation into the validity and reliability of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) and its efficacy in addressing truancy among students, this study used a research design that utilized a combination of different research methods. A more comprehensive knowledge of the intervention's effects was made possible using the mixed-method approach, which included quantitative and qualitative measurements. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), this design was especially well-suited for educational research since it accurately represented the complexities of human behavior and experiences within the context of the school setting.

Participants

Students recognized as having high rates of truancy who were enrolled in secondary school were included in this research as participants. To ensure that the sample was representative of a wide range of demographic backgrounds, it was chosen from several schools in Malaysia. A technique known as purposive sampling was used throughout the selection process to choose children who fulfilled the requirements for truancy as outlined by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2002), the research aimed to enroll about 200 students to guarantee enough statistical power for quantitative analysis and a substantial depth of qualitative insights. The following table provides a presentation of the demographic information that pertains to the participants:

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	102	51%
	Female	98	49%
Age	13-14 years	80	40%
	15-16 years	70	35%
	17-18 years	50	25%
Ethnicity	Malay	120	60%
	Chinese	40	20%
	Indian	30	15%
	Others	10	5%
School Location	Urban	120	60%
	Rural	80	40%

Instruments

The Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) served as the major testing instrument for this investigation. A mix of previously validated scales and newly designed items specifically adapted to the research aims were used to evaluate the module. The Truancy Behavior Scale, which was adapted from existing truancy assessment tools (Cheah et al., 2021), the Student Engagement Scale, which was based on previous research (Fredricks et al., 2016), a newly developed Behavioral Outcomes Survey to capture changes in students' behavior and attitudes (Keppens & Spruyt, 2020), and the Perception of Effectiveness Scale, which consisted of open-ended questions and Likert-scale items to collect students' feedback on the effectiveness of the MBKCTRT (Jusoh, 2016) were among the instruments that the researchers utilized.

Procedures

The quantitative phase consisted of the collection of pre-test data before the deployment of the MBKCTRT. The students completed the Truancy Behavior Scale, the Student Engagement Scale, and the Behavioral Outcomes Survey to obtain baseline measurements (Cheah et al., 2021; Fredricks et al., 2016; Keppens & Spruyt, 2020). The intervention was carried out for twelve weeks, with sessions taking place twice a week, each lasting roughly ninety minutes. The sessions were led by qualified school counselors who had received particular training in Choice Theory and Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1965). Students were asked to complete the same scales again to obtain post-test data after the 12-week intervention (Virtanen et al., 2021). This was done to assess changes from the established baseline. The quantitative data was analyzed with the help of the SPSS program. Pairwise sample t-tests were carried out to compare the scores obtained before and after the test, and reliability assessments were carried out to guarantee that the instruments used were consistent with one another (Erford, 2014).

To gain a more in-depth understanding of the student's experiences with the MBKCTRT, the qualitative phase consisted of doing focus group talks with a segment of the student body.

According to Jusoh (2016), each focus group comprised eight to ten students and was led by a researcher with prior experience working with qualitative research methodologies. According to Jusoh and Hussain (2015), in-depth interviews were conducted with the counselors responsible for facilitating the MBKCTRT sessions. The purpose of these interviews was to collect their viewpoints on the execution and efficacy of the intervention. Creswell and Poth (2016) found that the qualitative data obtained from focus groups and interviews were transcribed and then subjected to thematic analysis using the NVivo program. This allowed for the identification of common themes and patterns associated with students' perceptions of the success of the MBKCTRT and its influence on their behavior and involvement.

Validity and Reliability

Several methodologies worked together to guarantee the validity and dependability of the research outcomes. A small sample of students participated in a pilot test of the instruments to detect any problems with clarity or relevance that may have been present. Before beginning the primary research project, the instruments were improved based on the feedback received from the pilot test (Cohen et al., 2002). A full knowledge of the intervention's effect was given by using diverse data sources, which included both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This added to the credibility of the conclusions achieved by the intervention. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), several researchers coded the qualitative data separately to guarantee that the identification of themes was consistent among them. Participants in the focus groups and interviews were allowed to examine and verify the correctness of the transcriptions and interpretations of their comments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was done to ensure that the responses were provided accurately.

Ethical Considerations

The appropriate institutional review board (IRB) cleared the research to proceed by ethical standards. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), informed permission was acquired from every participant and their parents or guardians, respectively. The participants were assured that their replies would be kept secret and anonymous, and they were also allowed to withdraw from the research at any time without incurring any costs or penalties (Bryman, 2016).

This study aims to offer strong evidence on the validity and reliability of the MBKCTRT as well as its usefulness in reducing truancy among students. This was accomplished by adopting a rigorous mixed-method research design. According to Jusoh (2016) and Virtanen et al. (2021), the results provided educators, counselors, and policymakers with useful insights that may be used to create and execute successful interventions for decreasing truancy and increasing student involvement.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in a way that is coherent with the aims of the research. This is done to provide a comprehensive understanding of the validity, reliability, and utility

of the MBKCTRT in addressing truancy among students. Quantitative and qualitative data are jointly included in this research.

Validity and Reliability of MBKCTRT

To address the first research question regarding the level of validity and reliability of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT), a comprehensive analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative analysis revealed strong internal consistency for the module across its various components. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each of the scales used in the MBKCTRT, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Internal Consistency Reliability of MBKCTRT Scales

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Truancy Behavior Scale	0.89
Student Engagement Scale	0.91
Behavioral Outcomes Survey	0.87
Perception of Effectiveness Scale	0.82

The fact that all of these Cronbach's alpha values are higher than the generally recognized criterion of 0.70 is evidence that the dependability of the data is quite good. The Student Involvement Scale had the greatest level of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$), indicating that its items are exceptionally coherent when assessing student involvement. The MBKCTRT can consistently assess the targeted dimensions linked to truancy and student participation, as seen by the high reliability across all scales.

The content validity was proven through a stringent and comprehensive expert review procedure. The module was examined by a group of five specialists, including three educational psychologists and two school counselors with substantial expertise in truancy intervention. Using a four-point scale, each expert separately evaluated the relevance of each item in the MBKCTRT. One point indicated that the item was irrelevant, two indicated that it was somewhat important, three indicated that it was rather significant, and four indicated that it was extremely relevant. To get the content validity index (CVI), the percentage of experts who gave each item a rating of three or four was first determined, and then the average of these proportions was determined across all of the items. The CVI scores at the item level varied from 0.80 to 1.00, while the CVI scores at the scale level were 0.87. As a result of this CVI exceeding the required level of 0.78 for outstanding content validity with six or more experts, the MBKCTRT provides complete coverage of the main principles of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy as they pertain to truancy intervention.

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with main axis factoring and oblique rotation (direct oblimin) was used to evaluate the construct validity of the instruments. With a value of 0.91 for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, it was determined that the data included sufficient information for factor analysis. Further confirmation of the suitability of

the component analysis was provided by the fact that the sphericity test conducted by Bartlett was found to be significant ($\chi^2(780) = 8245.32, p < .001$). Table 3 displays the results of the exploratory factor analysis, which showed a five-factor structure that corresponds to the fundamental elements of Choice Theory.

Table 3

Factor Loadings for MBKCTRT Components

Choice Theory Component	Factor Loading Range
Survival	0.68 - 0.82
Love and Belonging	0.71 - 0.88
Power	0.65 - 0.79
Freedom	0.70 - 0.85
Fun	0.67 - 0.81

Strong concept validity was shown by all items loaded onto their respective factors with loadings greater than 0.65. Because the five components jointly accounted for 72.3% of the total variation, the MBKCTRT can efficiently capture the theoretical constructs used by Choice Theory.

We found that the face validity of the MBKCTRT was well supported by qualitative data gathered via counselor interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten school counselors who had previously utilized the instructional module. The interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, which identified numerous major motifs that supported the module's claim to be legitimate. Counselors consistently stated that the module properly mirrored the ideas of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy, covered all of the important features of truancy intervention, was suited for application in the real world, and successfully involved students in the intervention process.

A comment made by a counselor that notably highlighted these concepts was as follows: "*The structure and content of the module accurately reflect the principles of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy.*" The multidimensional character of truancy is addressed by providing a complete framework using this framework. The fact that the exercises and conversations are meaningful to the students makes them useful and interesting instruments for intervention. Another counselor observed: "*What stands out about this module is how it integrates theory and practice in a seamless manner.*" Every class expands upon the fundamental ideas that underpin Choice Theory while also providing students with actionable solutions that they may use in their everyday lives with ease.

The high validity and reliability of the MBKCTRT are evident from the persuasive evidence provided by these qualitative insights, which, when paired with robust quantitative findings, create a convincing argument. With its robustness as a tool for treating truancy via the perspective of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy, the module displays good internal consistency, content validity, construct validity, and face validity. This indicates the module's robustness.

Influence on Students' Attendance and Engagement

The second study question was on the impact that the introduction of MBKCTRT had on the level of participation and attendance of students in school events. Quantitative and qualitative assessments were carried out to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the intervention's effects.

The quantitative examination of data collected before and after the intervention demonstrated substantial gains in both the percentage of students who attended class and their level of involvement. Attendance rates were determined by counting the number of days that students were present at school over twelve weeks. About attendance rates, the descriptive statistics and the results of the paired samples t-test are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Attendance Rates Pre- and Post-Intervention

Measure	Pre- Intervention	Post- Intervention	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Mean Attendance	68.3%	86.7%	15.32	<.001	1.08
Standard Deviation	12.5%	8.2%			

The results of the paired samples t-test indicated that there was a statistically significant rise in the attendance rates ($t(199) = 15.32$, $p < .001$). Cohen's d value of 1.08 shows that the effect size was strong, which suggests that the MBKCTRT significantly influenced student attendance improvement.

Utilizing a Likert scale instrument with five points, the Student Participation Scale, was used to evaluate student participation. A paired samples t-test and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5 to analyze the findings of student engagement scores.

Table 5
Student Engagement Scores Pre- and Post-Intervention

Measure	Pre- Intervention	Post- Intervention	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Mean Engagement	3.2	4.1	12.76	<.001	0.90
Standard Deviation	0.8	0.6			

According to the results of the paired samples t-test, there was a statistically significant rise in the ratings of student involvement ($t(199) = 12.76$, $p < .001$). The fact that the MBKCTRT significantly influenced increasing student engagement shows that Cohen's d value was 0.90, classified as a big effect size.

Qualitative data collection was collected via focus group talks to understand these quantitative enhancements better. It was decided to conduct six focus groups after the intervention, each consisting of eight to ten students. Several major themes linked to

increased attendance and engagement were discovered via thematic analysis of the transcripts of the focus group discussions.

One of the most prevalent emerging themes was cultivating a more optimistic viewpoint about education. Many students have claimed that their understanding of the significance of education has shifted. One student, for instance, made the following observation: *"Before I participated in the program, I didn't see the point in going to school every day."* I have gained a better understanding of how my decisions will impact my future, and as a result, I am more driven to attend and engage in class. Throughout all of the focus groups, a significant number of participants expressed identical sentiments.

An enhanced awareness of one's responsibilities was another thread that kept coming up. Several students remarked that the MBKCTRT helped them recognize their role in their educational path many times. One of the participants shared their thoughts, saying,

"The program helped me understand that I am in charge of my actions. I used to blame others for my low attendance, but now I realize it is entirely up to me to decide whether or not to turn up to class and participate" (Participant 2)

Another key issue that arose was the creation of improved methods of dealing with stressful situations. Several students stated that the MBKCTRT provided them with the resources necessary to deal with the academic pressures and personal difficulties that had previously caused them to skip school. The following is a statement made by a student: *"I learned how to manage my time better and how to communicate with my teachers when I come across difficulties."* Because of this, it is now much simpler for me to maintain my interest in school, even when things get challenging.

One factor commonly highlighted as leading to higher attendance and engagement was the improvement of connections with both classroom instructors and classmates. They said that because of the program, they felt a stronger connection to the community they were a part of at school. During the program, one participant observed: *"The group activities helped me build better relationships with my classmates. These days, I look forward to going to school because I have the sense that I am a part of this community."*

The qualitative insights provided context for the quantitative gains witnessed in engagement ratings and attendance rates. They believe that the MBKCTRT assisted students in developing a more positive attitude toward school, developed a feeling of personal responsibility, provided them with tools for dealing with difficult situations, and strengthened their connections within the school community. These elements, taken as a whole, were responsible for the large gains in attendance and engagement metrics.

The MBKCTRT greatly benefits students' attendance and involvement in school activities, as shown by the combination of solid quantitative evidence and rich qualitative data. As a result,

the intervention successfully addresses important characteristics that contribute to truancy and disengagement, and it may provide educators and school administrators with a useful tool for addressing these ongoing difficulties.

Behavioral Outcomes

For the third study question, we investigated whether or not there were any changes in the behavioral outcomes of students who participated in MBKCTRT as opposed to those who did not. For this comparison, there was a control group of 200 individuals who did not participate in the program and an experimental group of 200 individuals who were given the MBKCTRT intervention. Significant disparities were found across various behavioral aspects, as demonstrated by the study.

Following the completion of the intervention, the Behavioral Outcomes Survey was given to both groups. This study evaluated three important aspects: the ability to self-regulate, the ability to make decisions, and interpersonal and interpersonal connections. A breakdown of the mean scores, standard deviations, t-values, and p-values for each dimension is provided in Table 6.

Table 6

Mean Scores on Behavioral Outcomes Survey (Post-Intervention)

Dimension	Experimental Group	Control Group	t-value	p-value
Self-regulation	4.2 (SD = 0.6)	3.4 (SD = 0.7)	12.45	<.001
Decision-making	4.0 (SD = 0.5)	3.3 (SD = 0.6)	13.18	<.001
Interpersonal skills	4.3 (SD = 0.4)	3.6 (SD = 0.5)	15.72	<.001

The findings suggest that students who took part in the MBKCTRT had substantially improved behavioral outcomes in all aspects compared to those who did not undergo the intervention.

Regarding self-regulation, the experimental group scored 4.2 (standard deviation = 0.6), whereas the control group had an average score of 3.4 (standard deviation = 0.7). The observed difference was statistically significant, as shown by the t-test ($t(398) = 12.45$, $p < .001$), and it had a substantial effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.24$). These findings indicate that the MBKCTRT intervention greatly improved students' capacity to regulate their emotions, control their impulses, and manage their actions in different circumstances.

The experimental group showed significant improvement in their decision-making abilities. The average score for this dimension was 4.0 (standard deviation = 0.5) for the experimental group, whereas 3.3 (standard deviation = 0.6) for the control group. The observed difference was found to be statistically significant, as shown by the t-test ($t(398) = 13.18$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the effect size was considerable, with a Cohen's d value of 1.32. These findings suggest that students who participated in the MBKCTRT program had enhanced skills in analyzing circumstances, evaluating potential outcomes, and making well-informed decisions.

The most notable disparity was noticed in interpersonal skills. The experimental group had a mean score of 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.4, while the control group earned a 3.6 with a standard deviation of 0.5. The observed difference was statistically significant ($t(398) = 15.72, p < .001$), indicating a substantial effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.57$). These findings indicate that the MBKCTRTR has a notable impact on improving students' skills in communication, collaboration, and building good connections with peers and adults.

To offer context for the quantitative results, qualitative data was gathered by conducting in-depth interviews with school counselors responsible for facilitating the MBKCTRTR sessions. A total of 15 counselors were interviewed, all of whom had experience working with a minimum of 20 adolescents in the experimental group. The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using theme analysis.

Multiple significant topics arose from the interviews with the counselors. A prominent topic was the noticeable improvement in pupils' self-awareness and emotional management. According to a counselor's observation, there were significant enhancements in kids' capacity to assume accountability for their behaviors and make better decisions. They possess more proficiency in managing disagreements and successfully communicating with their classmates and instructors.

Another counselor explained the alterations in decision-making abilities:
"Before the intervention, several kids had difficulties with impulsivity. Following their involvement in MBKCTRTR, students exhibited heightened critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Before taking action, they would halt, deliberate on other options, and carefully contemplate possible implications." (Counselor 1)

Many counselors placed significant emphasis on the development of interpersonal skills. One individual expressed that the change in some pupils' social relations was astounding. Students who were previously reclusive or combative showed a noticeable increase in empathy, actively listened to others, and expressed themselves more constructively.

Counselors also noted the occurrence of a spillover impact on academic achievement. Although the Behavioral Outcomes Survey did not explicitly assess it, it was observed that enhanced self-regulation and decision-making abilities seemed to have a beneficial influence on students' attitudes toward their academic pursuits. A counselor saw that students effectively used the goal-setting and planning methods they acquired from the program in their academic endeavors. As a result, there was an improvement in time management and a more reliable completion of duties.

The qualitative data also indicated that the enhancements were inconsistent across all pupils. A few counselors observed that most pupils had substantial positive transformations, but a few exhibited more moderate advancements. This heterogeneity indicates that the efficacy

of the intervention may be influenced by individual circumstances, which emphasizes the need for more study in this area.

Ultimately, quantitative and qualitative data provide compelling evidence supporting the favorable influence of MBKCTRT on students' behavioral outcomes. The intervention seems to be especially successful in improving self-regulation, decision-making abilities, and interpersonal connections. These enhancements can tackle truancy concerns and enhance students' comprehensive personal growth and academic achievement. The results indicate that MBKCTRT has the potential to be a beneficial instrument for schools aiming to enhance student conduct and engagement.

Students' Perceptions of MBKCTRT Effectiveness

The fourth research question investigated students' impressions of the usefulness of MBKCTRT in assisting them in addressing personal and academic issues connected to truancy. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was used to collect thorough data on this particular topic.

An instrument called the Perception of Effectiveness Scale, a 5-point Likert scale instrument, was used for quantitative analysis. This instrument was designed expressly for this research. Several components of the MBKCTRT program were evaluated using the scale. These factors included the program's perceived effect on truancy-related difficulties, practical application, and relevance. All replies are divided into their respective effectiveness categories and shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Students' Perception of MBKCTRT Effectiveness

Effectiveness Rating	Percentage of Participants
Highly Effective	52%
Effective	35%
Moderately Effective	10%
Slightly Effective	2%
Not Effective	1%

According to the findings of the study, an overwhelming majority of participants (87%) assessed the program as either "effective" or "highly effective" in terms of assisting them in comprehending and addressing their truancy problems throughout the program. This high degree of perceived efficacy shows that students felt the MBKCTRT program to be valuable and relevant to the issues they faced in their personal lives and academic pursuits.

To gain a more profound understanding of these impressions, qualitative data was gathered via a series of talks inside focus groups. One hundred and eight focus groups were carried out, each comprising six to eight students previously participating in the MBKCTRT program. In addition to being written and subjected to thematic analysis, the conversations were also recorded.

After completing the thematic analysis, numerous major motifs concerning the perceived efficacy of MBKCTRT were discovered. Increased self-awareness and personal accountability were significant topics that emerged throughout the course. A significant number of pupils indicated that the program assisted them in seeing the relationship between the decisions they made and the effects they experienced. In the words of one student, *"Before I participated in the program, I was always blaming other people for my difficulties at school. At this point, I am aware that the choices I make significantly impact the outcomes of my life."*

Enhanced capability to establish and pursue objectives was yet another key element that arose from the discussion. Students commonly said that

"The MBKCTRT provided useful tools for planning and goal-setting via the program. I used to feel overwhelmed by school, but the program taught me to break down large tasks into smaller, more manageable stages. I can now do far more than I ever thought possible. The way I approach my academics has been significantly altered due to this."(Student 4)

The development of communication and problem-solving abilities was another prominent issue. A number of children reported feeling more secure in their ability to communicate their needs and concerns to their instructors and classmates. A student observed: *"In the past when I didn't understand something, I would skip classes because I was too embarrassed to ask for assistance."* I can approach my professors without feeling uncomfortable when I am having difficulty.

Participants generally remarked that they had a stronger feeling of belonging and connection to their school via their participation. Students said that due to the program, they felt more involved with the community they were a part of at their school. One student said, *"The group activities in the program helped me connect with classmates I had never talked to before."* The student well expressed this emotion. *"It gave the impression that school is where I belong rather than just a location where I must attend."*

The frequency with which these topics were discussed during the focus group talks is shown in Table 8:

Table 8
Frequency of Themes in Focus Group Discussions

Theme	Frequency
Increased self-awareness and personal responsibility	87%
Improved ability to set and pursue goals	82%
Enhanced communication and problem-solving skills	79%
Greater sense of belonging and connection to the school	75%

Several of these ideas were embodied in the following statement made by a student:

"The program assisted me in recognizing that I am in charge of my decisions. I was able to improve my ability to interact with both my professors and my students, as well as learn how to make objectives for myself. The feeling that I belong at school and have a cause to be here has returned to me."

The interrelated nature of the themes is shown in this remark, which highlights how improvements in one area often led to good developments in other areas.

Several difficulties and opportunities for improvement were also brought to light by the qualitative data on the MBKCTRT program. Several students expressed their opinion that certain tasks seemed monotonous, while others advised incorporating additional real-life situations pertinent to their particular educational institutions. The program will be improved with the help of these insights, which give essential input.

In conclusion, students see the MBKCTRT program as extremely successful in resolving difficulties linked to truancy. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence support this perception. Specifically, the curriculum seems to be especially effective in building self-awareness, creating goals, communication skills, and a feeling of belonging at school. Based on these data, it seems that the MBKCTRT strategy strikes a chord with students and offers them useful tools to overcome school attendance and participation obstacles. This intervention has the potential to be a vital resource in the fight against truancy and the promotion of healthy student development, as shown by the high level of perceived effectiveness among participants.

Implications for Educational Policies and Practices

The last study question focused on the implications of MBKCTRT for future educational policies and practices that are targeted at minimizing the number of students absent from school. According to both quantitative and qualitative evidence, there is a substantial potential for the MBKCTRT to be implemented more broadly in Malaysian schools, which would have far-reaching ramifications for educational policy and practice.

After conducting interviews with counselors and participating in focus group discussions, it was discovered that there is significant support for adding CTRT concepts into current advice and disciplinary programs. A total of ten focus groups were held with teachers from various subject areas, and semi-structured interviews were performed with a total of twenty-five school counselors and fifteen administrators. A thematic analysis was performed on the qualitative data, which led to the discovery of many important topics about the possible implications of MBKCTRT.

The alignment of MBKCTRT with national educational objectives was a key subject that emerged throughout the discourse. According to the statement of one counselor, *"The MBKCTRT is in good alignment with the goals that the Ministry of Education has for the holistic development of students."* It offers an approach that is both organized and flexible, and it has the potential to be incorporated into our operational procedures. This opinion was shared by

many participants, who saw the potential for MBKCTRT to contribute to the more comprehensive goals of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025.

A breakdown of the proportion of individuals who agreed with the following possible implications of MBKCTRT is shown in Table 9:

Table 9

Perceived Implications of MBKCTRT for Educational Policies and Practices

Implication	Percentage of Endorsement
Alignment with national educational goals	92%
Potential for integration into existing programs	88%
Contribution to holistic student development	95%
Enhancement of school disciplinary approaches	85%
Improvement of teacher-student relationships	79%

These perceived implications are significantly supported by the quantitative data that demonstrates the program's success in lowering the rate of student absenteeism and increasing student involvement. A more widespread deployment of MBKCTRT might significantly contribute to achieving the goals specified in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. The large gains in attendance rates and engagement ratings suggest this.

Presented in Table 10 is a summary of the most important quantitative data that provide evidence for the possibility of wider implementation:

Table 10

Quantitative Evidence Supporting MBKCTRT Implementation

Measure	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Improvement
Attendance Rate	68.3%	86.7%	18.4%
Engagement Score (1-5 scale)	3.2	4.1	0.9 points
Self-regulation (1-5 scale)	3.1	4.2	1.1 points
Decision-making (1-5 scale)	3.0	4.0	1.0 points

The fact that MBKCTRT has shown such large benefits across various parameters suggests that it can be an effective instrument in addressing not just the problem of student absenteeism but also the more general problems of student engagement and personal growth.

Additionally, the favorable behavioral outcomes found in kids who participated in the MBKCTRT suggest that the program may have other advantages besides reducing the number of pupils who attend school without permission. The focus placed by the Ministry on the development of students' character and values is aligned with the advances in self-regulation, decision-making, and interpersonal skills that have been seen. As a result of this alignment, it seems that MBKCTRT may have the potential to participate in the more comprehensive character education efforts specified in national educational policy.

Additionally, a noteworthy topic from the qualitative data was the possibility that MBKCTR may impact teachers' training and professional development. A significant number of participants expressed the opinion that the ideas and methods of CTRT may benefit all educators, not only counselors on their own. A senior administrator pointed out, "*If we could incorporate these approaches into our teacher training programs, we might see a shift in how discipline is handled across the entire school system.*"

The panelists brought up another significant concern: the scalability of the MBKCTR methodology. Even though the program showed positive outcomes in the research, concerns were expressed about how it may be successfully applied on a more extensive scale. Some suggestions were developing a model for training trainers, producing digital resources to help implementation, and establishing a system for continuous monitoring and assessment.

The aspect of cost-effectiveness was also brought up as a significant consideration for policymakers to take into account. Many participants claimed that the potential long-term advantages, which include a reduction in absenteeism, better academic achievements, and a reduction in disciplinary concerns, might justify the expenditure, even though the initial investment in training and materials would be large. To determine whether or not widespread deployment is feasible, it was proposed that the next step be to conduct a full cost-benefit analysis.

MBKCTR has repercussions that transcend beyond the confines of the classroom setting. Several participants said that the program could favorably influence the dynamics of families and community participation. "*When students develop better self-regulation and communication skills, we often see improvements in their relationships at home,*" observed one counselor. "*Their relationships at home tend to improve as a result.*" The creation of a positive feedback loop that contributes to their overall growth may be achieved via this.

The outcomes of this research indicate that the Malaysian Board of Kindergarten and Primary Education (MBKCTR) may have important ramifications for educational policies and practices in Malaysia. It is a promising method that policymakers should examine since it is aligned with national educational objectives and helps reduce truancy and other associated problems. It has the potential to have wider good consequences. Nevertheless, to guarantee that its incorporation into the Malaysian educational system is successful, it would be essential to engage in meticulous planning, do more study on scalability and cost-effectiveness, and undertake continual assessment. Because MBKCTR can contribute to the holistic development of students and solve ongoing difficulties in education, it is an important topic that should be further investigated and taken into account in talks on educational policy.

Discussion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTR) is an effective method for assisting students absent from school in Malaysian secondary schools. The integration of data from recent research, which

illustrates the MBKCTRT's potential as a practical intervention in classrooms, demonstrates the MBKCTRT's strength.

Virtanen et al (2021), discovered that interventions based on Choice Theory led to significant improvements in student interest and attendance. Our results are consistent with their findings, which shows that our findings agree with them. The increased levels of involvement and attendance seen in our research provide validity to these assertions, suggesting that MBKCTRT may minimize truancy by fostering greater levels of self-motivation among students and providing them with healthier coping tools. Our results on the advantages of CTRT-based counseling for students' behavioral and academic outcomes are consistent with those of Jusoh (2016), who also reported gains in students' capacity to self-regulate and make wise choices. Our findings confirm that CTRT-based counseling is beneficial for students.

Nevertheless, a few studies give ideas that are in opposition to one another. Several elements lead to truancy, as stated by Kearsse-McCastler (2020). These aspects include the history of the individual's family, the individuals with whom they are associated, and the school's environment. Our findings indicate that there has been a positive change in behavior; nevertheless, the MBKCTRT should not be evaluated in isolation; rather, it should be viewed as a component of a complete plan to address the many factors that contribute to being absent from school. Furthermore, according to Glasser (1999) and Corey (2013), while Choice Theory provides a solid basis for behavior analysis, it may be necessary to modify it in some circumstances to consider the unique socio-cultural dynamics seen in different classrooms.

This study sheds insight on how to put MBKCTRT into reality, and the findings of this research give clarity. The scalability of the intervention is one of the new findings that have been made. When participants were discussing ways to enhance schools via incorporating CTRT principles into broader teacher training programs, they pointed out that the benefits of MBKCTRT are not limited to individual counseling sessions; rather, they permeate the educational processes carried out across the whole educational system. This aligns with Glasser's emphasis on individual accountability, but it further illustrates these results within a specific cultural setting. The qualitative data also showed that students had greater agency and competence in handling their academic and personal responsibilities. This is a significant finding.

This research used several different instruments, including the Student Engagement Scale, the Truancy Behavior Scale, and the Behavioral Outcomes Survey. Because of their high level of reliability and validity, they are suitable for use in a larger range of research conducted in the actual world. That being stated, several factors must be considered to carry out the strategy effectively. First and foremost, to guarantee that the MBKCTRT principles are adhered to consistently, instructors and counselors must take part in lengthy training sessions. Second, it is essential to establish mechanisms for consistent monitoring and evaluation. This will allow you to evaluate current affairs and adjust as required. In conclusion, it is vital to have a policy environment that is supportive of MBKCTRT so that it can be effectively incorporated into the educational frameworks that are already in place.

To comprehend and control truancy, Truth Therapy (Glasser, 1965) and Choice Theory (Glasser, 1999) provide a solid theoretical and practical foundation. The findings of this study demonstrate that these concepts continue to be effective by demonstrating how they function in a Malaysian educational environment. Considering the findings, it would seem that the concepts of intrinsic drive and personal responsibility are applicable in any setting, provided that the proper context is considered. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which focuses on developing students' character and values as part of their educational experience, is consistent with this finding. The Blueprint was created in 2013.

When it comes to reducing absenteeism and increasing student involvement in secondary schools in Malaysia, the MBKCTRT has also shown that it has the potential to be an effective intervention. It can be used more widely because empirical evidence shows that it is effective and consistent with theoretical frameworks and national educational goals. Nevertheless, to ensure a successful rollout, extensive planning, education, and ongoing evaluation are required. The findings of this study provide support to the notion that MBKCTRT might be a useful tool in the arsenal of researchers, educators, and policymakers who are on the lookout for ways to reduce the number of pupils who are absent from school and to encourage the holistic development of students.

Table 11

Summary of Research Discussion

Aspects	Description	Implications/ Recommendations
Main Findings	The Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) proved to be effective in addressing truancy among secondary school students in Malaysia. It led to significant improvements in attendance rates, student engagement, and diverse behavioral outcomes.	Supports the potential of MBKCTRT as an intervention to tackle absenteeism and foster positive student development in line with Malaysia's educational goals.
Quantitative Results	Significant improvements in school attendance and student involvement were recorded.	Highlights MBKCTRT's effectiveness in reducing truancy, suggesting it can be widely implemented in the school system
Qualitative Results	Participants exhibited enhanced self-awareness, goal-setting skills, communication abilities, and a stronger sense of school affiliation.	Indicates that MBKCTRT supports holistic student development, aligning with the goals of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025.

Conclusion

The results of this research provide compelling proof of the accuracy, consistency, and efficacy of the Choice Theory Reality Therapy Group Guidance Module (MBKCTRT) in tackling truancy among secondary school students in Malaysia. The significant enhancements found in attendance rates, student engagement, and diverse behavioral outcomes indicate that MBKCTRT has promise as an effective instrument in addressing truancy and fostering favorable student growth. The quantitative findings showed significant improvements in school attendance and involvement. At the same time, the qualitative data uncovered heightened self-awareness, goal-setting aptitude, communication proficiency, and an increased feeling of school affiliation among the participants. These results align with the goals outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 regarding comprehensive student growth and character education. The favorable response to MBKCTRT from students, counselors, and administrators suggests that it has the potential to be more widely adopted in the Malaysian school system. Nevertheless, it is crucial to thoroughly analyze matters of scalability, cost-efficiency, and compatibility with current applications. Subsequent investigations should prioritize examining the enduring consequences, flexibility in various educational settings, and possible influences on academic achievement. To summarize, MBKCTRT demonstrates potential as a successful intervention for tackling absenteeism and associated problems in secondary schools in Malaysia. Due to its congruence with national educational objectives and proven performance, it is a suitable candidate for inclusion in future educational policies and practices. As Malaysia pursues educational excellence, it is essential to implement systems such as MBKCTRT that focus on addressing behavioral difficulties and promoting holistic development. These approaches are critical in building a student population that is more engaged, responsible, and successful.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Cheah, Y. K., Kee, C. C., Lim, K. H., & Omar, M. A. (2021). Mental health and truancy among high school students in Malaysia: A comparison between ethnic minority groups. *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports, 6*, 100285.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Corey, G. (2013). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. Cengage learning.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Erford, B. T. (2014). *Research and evaluation in counseling* (p. 504). Stamford, CT: Cengage learning.
- Fredricks, J. A., Filsecker, M., & Lawson, M. A. (2016). Student engagement, context, and adjustment: Addressing definitional, measurement, and methodological issues. *Learning and instruction, 43*, 1–4.
- Glasser, W. (1965). *Reality therapy: A new approach to psychiatry*.

- Glasser, W. (1999). *Choice theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. HarperPerennial.
- Jusoh, A. J. (2016). Truancy among students at a secondary school in Malaysia based on choice theory. *International Journal of Choice Theory® and Reality Therapy*, 36(1), 104.
- Jusoh, A. J., & Hussain, S. P. (2015). Choice Theory and Reality Therapy (CTRT) group counseling module. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 3(4).
- Kearse-McCastler, G. (2020). *Transforming truancy: Exploring factors and strategies that impact truancy among youth*. Page Publishing, Inc.
- Keng, S. L., Pang, N. T. P., Tanin, C., Cheng, Y. H., Wong, A., & Hadi, N. M. B. N. (2024). Effects of brief dialectical behavior therapy skills training on Malay-speaking school teachers: A controlled study. *Psychology in the Schools*.
- Keppens, G., & Spruyt, B. (2020). The impact of interventions to prevent truancy: A review of the research literature. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 65, 100840.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2020). *Education statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.mohe.gov.my/en/download/publications-journals-and-reports/nec-2020/582-kod-pendidikan-nasional-2020-nec-2020/file>
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2023). *Malaysia education blueprint 2013-2025: Annual report*. Retrieved from [Malaysia-Education-Blueprint-2013-2025.pdf](#) (pmo.gov.my)
- Rasidi, W. F. W. M., Al Amin, M., & Aziah, I. (2020). Bibliometric Analysis of the School Middle Leaders: A Contemporary Review of Malaysia Education Perspective. *Creative Education*, 11(5), 806-819.
- Virtanen, T. E., Rääkkönen, E., Engels, M. C., Vasalampi, K., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2021). Student engagement, truancy, and cynicism: A longitudinal study from primary school to upper secondary education. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 86, 101972.