



Intervention Fidelity

UNDERSTANDING WHY AN INTERVENTION WORKS OR DOESN'T

Researchers often assume that their programs or interventions will be implemented and received the same way each time. However, that is rarely the case; the way an intervention is implemented usually differs from the way the intervention was designed. Computers stop working, facilitators go off script, and participants draw different conclusions from the same experience. Any one of these factors has the potential to undermine the effectiveness of an intervention. The extent to which an intervention or program is implemented and received as intended is known as **intervention fidelity** (a.k.a. program integrity, implementation fidelity).

HOW INTERVENTIONS WORK: THE PROCESSES AT PLAY

When an intervention or program is implemented, it will be effective to the extent that it instigates two types of processes:

Intervention Black Box

Intervention processes are the core components of the intervention theorized to drive changes in participants. Intervention processes impact key psychological processes within the participants.

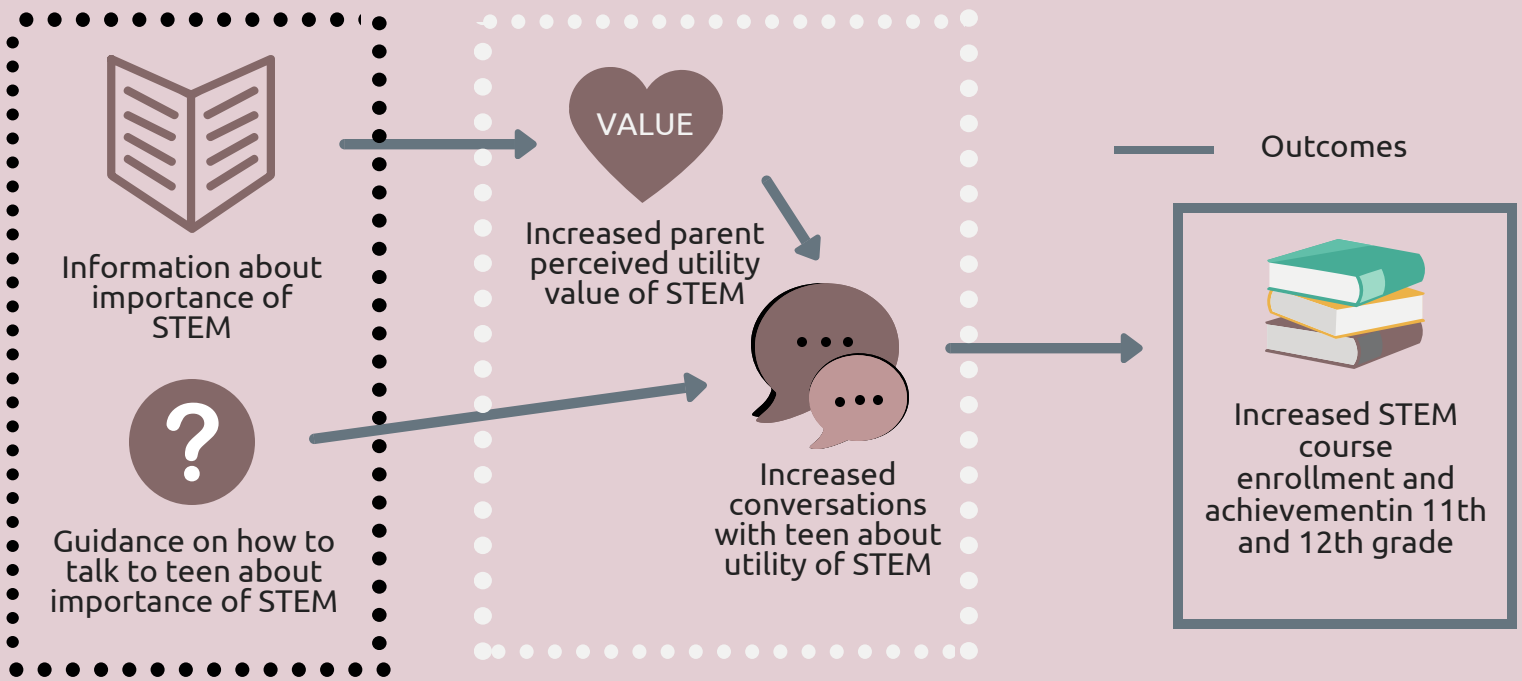


Psychological processes refer to the changes in participants, such as depth of knowledge and attitudes. Psychological processes, in turn, lead to the desired outcome.

We designed an intervention to encourage high school students to enroll in more math and science courses by educating parents about the value of taking math and science courses. We intended for parents to receive a brochure about the topic, access a companion website with more information, and have conversations with their children about the relevance of math and science to their current and future lives.

●●●● Intervention processes

●●●● Psychological processes



For a successful intervention, assessing intervention fidelity can help program developers, researchers, and practitioners know which aspects of a program are necessary for successful outcomes (e.g., whether providing a brochure, website, or both resources to parents is effective). For an unsuccessful intervention, assessing intervention fidelity can help researchers understand why an intervention or program did not work as intended (e.g., lack of specific information in brochures, broken link to website, parents not being able to effectively influence their high school students' decisions). Without examining intervention fidelity, it is difficult to determine whether unfavorable intervention results are due to an ineffective intervention design or incomplete implementation of the program.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEWS

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EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES

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