

Effectiveness of Group Intervention Based on PEERS' Program on Behavioral Problems and Social Anxiety in Adolescents with High-Function Autism Disorder

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Introduction

Boys with autism spectrum disorder experience mental and physical changes of adolescence period. These teens may have behavioral problems (anxiety, depression and aggression) due to failure in adapting with changes in this period and relationships with peers. These teens have difficulty in understanding social norms, and social anxiety can be seen in them. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of group intervention based on PEERS' program on reducing behavioral problems and social anxiety in adolescents with high-function autism disorder.

Method

This study was performed using single-subject method and A-B-A design. The statistical population of the study included students with autism spectrum disorder in Yazd city in the academic year of 2017-2018. Four students with high-function autism were selected through purposeful sampling method. The training sessions were organized according to the PEERS' intervention program in 14 sessions, each 60 minutes. Based on the results of the visual analysis of the data, the program has been effective in improving behavioral problems and social anxiety. In order to follow-up the intervention, one month after the intervention, the children's behavior assessment system (BASC-3) and the social anxiety questionnaire (SAS-A) were completed by mothers and adolescents.

Results

Based on the findings of this study, it seems that the nature of the intervention program with the participation of mothers, together with the

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creation of opportunities for the interaction of adolescents, lead to the improvement of social anxiety. Also, the PEERS' program can have a direct and positive effect on behavioral problems. In the present study, the data were plotted separately for each subject and the differences between the data were taken into account. These differences were notable as well as the differences between baseline data and experimental location.

Conclusion

The present study provides evidence for the effectiveness of PEERS' program on behavioral problems and social anxiety in adolescents with High-Function Autism disorder. It seems that the group nature of the program, use of role playing and maternal participation have important role in decreasing behavioral problems and social anxiety in adolescents with high-function autism disorder.

Keywords: PEERS' program; Behavioral problems; Social anxiety; High-function autism (HFA).

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