

The Effects of mindfulness-based cognitive group therapy on depression and anxiety in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder

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Introduction

Indeed, many notable parameters such as difficult and late diagnosis, occurrence of symptoms after a natural and normal course of growth, lack of effective treatment of autism spectrum disorder and special care which is needed by autism children, can affect the mental health of parents, and in particular mothers. In psychotherapy research, mindfulness is considered as one of the new therapies in the field of relapse prevention and an enhanced state of self-awareness thought in order to improve the depression and anxiety. Considering the existence of mood disorders and anxiety in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder, the overall aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on depression and anxiety in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder.

Method:

This research, which is a quasi-experimental study, comprised of pre-test, post-test and follow-up study with the control group. The sample group was selected by available sampling method from mothers referred to the Isfahan "Hazrat Zainab" autism charity. Therefore, 20 subjects were chosen randomly and assigned to two control and experimental groups (each with 10 subjects). In order to assess the severity of depression and anxiety in mothers, Beck Depression Inventory-II and Beck Anxiety Inventory were used in pre-test, post-test and one month follow-up phases. The experimental group received the mindfulness-based cognitive group therapy for eight 2-hours sessions each week and the control group did not receive any treatment. Analysis of MANCOVA was used to analyze the data.

Results

The results of the research revealed that at the post-test stage, depression and anxiety scores decreased significantly in the experimental group after the intervention. Moreover, the experimental group was followed up for one

month after the treatment, which no changes were observed in the mentioned scores, compared to the post-test phase. It is worth mentioning that the conditions for the control group were almost the same and no changes were occurred.

Conclusions

Therefore, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy has been effective in the treatment of depression and anxiety in autistic children's mothers. The results emphasized the importance of using this intervention in treating depression and anxiety in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder and presenting new insights in clinical interventions. This research showed that using this treatment, reduce psychological problems of mothers of autistic spectrum children, such as their depression and anxiety were reduced, which ultimately lead to prominent results such as the life expectancy increase, adapting to the conditions of the child's illness, better relations with others, having more social activities and reduction of depression and anxiety problems.

Keywords: mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, anxiety, depression, mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder