

Efficacy of Play Therapy Based on Cognitive-Behavioral Approach on the Executive Functions and Social Competence in Female Students with Signs of Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

Maliheh Aminian *
Moslem Asli Azad**

Introduction

One of the most common childhood neurodevelopmental disorders is attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, which affects many aspects of development, including the development of social, emotional and cognitive functions in the home and school environment. Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder is characterized by unpleasant developmental disorders and impairment in gross motor activities, attention and impulsivity and affects 3–5% of children worldwide. These children are prone to many complications, including poor academic performance, behavioral disorders, communication disorders, social withdrawal and adjustment problems. Children with this disorder do not have the ability to pay close attention to details or make careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities. They are often disorganized when performing activities and perform tasks carelessly and without sufficient thought. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the efficacy of play therapy based on a cognitive-behavioral approach on executive functions and social competence in female students with signs of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Method

The research method was quasi-experimental with a pretest, post-test, control group and two-month follow-up period design. The statistical population included female fourth- and fifth-grade students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Zone 2 in the city of Shiraz in the academic year 2019-20. 27 students were selected through the purposive

* Master of Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Firoozabad Branch, Fars, Iran.

** PhD in Psychology, Member of Young and Elite Researchers Club, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Isfahan, Iran. *Corresponding Author:* azzad2020@gmail.com

sampling method from the statistical population and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Then, the children in the experimental group received play therapy based on a cognitive-behavioral approach in 10 sessions of 50 minutes over the course of one month. The applied questionnaires included the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Questionnaire (ADHDQ) (Brock, Clinton, 2007), the Social Competence Scale (SCS) (Cohen and Rosman, 1972), and the Executive Functions Questionnaire (EFQ) (Gerard et al., 2000). Mixed ANOVA and Bonferroni follow-up test levels were used to analyze the data.

Result

The results showed that the play therapy method based on a cognitive-behavioral approach has been effective on the executive functions and social competence of the students with signs of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder ($P < 0.005$). These results were stable in the follow-up period. Therefore, it is concluded that play therapy based on the cognitive-behavioral approach has had a significant effect on the executive functions and social competence of students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder by 59 and 60 percent. Statistical power also indicates high statistical accuracy and a sufficient sample size.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that play therapy based on a cognitive-behavioral approach can be used as an efficient method to improve executive functions and social competence in students with signs of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Through increasing interpersonal and group communication skills, self-consciousness, and negative emotion coping skills, and problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Keywords: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, play therapy based on cognitive-behavioral approach, social competence, executive functions

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