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The Effectiveness of Unconditional Positive Your Acceptance-Based Reality Therapy Package on the Quality of Parental Communication and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop a reality therapy package based on unconditional positive your acceptance and determine its effectiveness on the quality of parent communication and fear of negative evaluation in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders. The research method was a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with a 2-month follow-up period, with a control group. The statistical population of the study was mothers of children with autism in Sari in 2021-2022. 30 people were selected using a convenience sampling method and then randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups. The experimental group received 8 sessions of 60-minute reality therapy intervention based on unconditional positive your acceptance, and the control group did not receive any intervention. The research instrument was the Marital Relationship Quality Questionnaire by Cundy et al., (2016) and the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale by Leary (1983). The collected data were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance. The findings showed that the reality therapy package based on unconditional positive your acceptance has sufficient content validity according to experts. This package also has a significant effect on the quality of parent-child communication and fear of negative evaluation of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders ($P<0.05$). Based on the research findings, the reality therapy package based on unconditional positive your acceptance can be used as an efficient method to improve the quality of parent-child communication and reduce the fear of negative evaluation of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that leads to numerous problems in children's social interactions and behaviors in many areas. Many parents, especially mothers, feel guilty about their autistic child, and it is very difficult for parents to accept the reality. The basis of family formation and development is the quality of couples' communication. The birth of a child with special needs will lead to tension, frustration, feelings of sadness, and hopelessness. Because it can harm family functioning by affecting the quantity and quality of couples' relationships and the interaction of family members. Parents of children with autism can show higher levels of stress than parents of children with intellectual disabilities. One of the most common chronic disorders caused by this disorder for parents of such children is the fear of negative evaluation. One of the psychological constructs that can affect the mental health and well-being of individuals is the power of your acceptance. Your acceptance is the degree of approval, approval, and value that a person feels for themselves. Unconditional your acceptance is a fundamental factor in social-emotional adjustment and a general principle for internalizing your confidence. Therefore, the preparation of a new educational package tailored to the characteristics of mothers of children with autism seemed inevitable. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to examine the factors that weaken and strengthen the family institution in the current conditions and design educational content accordingly.

Method

This is a quasi-experimental study with a pre-test-post-test and 2-month follow-up period, with a control group. The statistical population of the study consisted of all mothers with children with autism in Sari in 2021-2022. 30 mothers were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria using the convenience sampling method, then they were assigned equally and randomly to two experimental and control groups. The inclusion criteria for the study included mothers with a single child with autism spectrum disorders and confirmed according to the records, files and diagnostic opinion of a psychiatrist or psychologist, willingness to participate in the study, minimum education of a high school diploma, not taking psychotherapeutic medications according to the clinical interview. Also, the exclusion criteria included: absenteeism of more than two sessions, simultaneous participation in other psychological interventions, substance abuse, and unwillingness to participate in the study.

Results

The results showed that 60% (18 people) of the participants had a diploma level of education, 26.7% (8 people) had an associate degree. The results showed that in the group of reality therapy training based on unconditional positive your acceptance, there was no significant difference between the two post-test and follow-up stages in the quality of parental communication and fear of negative evaluation in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders; so that the average score of the variable quality of parental communication in the post-test stage increased compared to the pre-test, and the variable and fear of negative evaluation decreased significantly, and this increase continued until the follow-up stage; after reality therapy training based on unconditional positive your

acceptance, the quality of parental communication increased and the fear of negative evaluation decreased in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders, and this difference continued in the follow-up stage.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the unconditional positive your acceptance-based reality therapy package on the quality of parental communication and fear of negative evaluation in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders. The findings showed that the unconditional positive your acceptance-based reality therapy package led to an increase in the quality of parental communication and a decrease in the fear of negative evaluation in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders, and these changes continued until the follow-up stage. This finding is explained by the fact that the unconditional positive your acceptance-based reality therapy increased women's awareness of the severity of their needs and created a sense of responsibility in them, and as a result of satisfying their needs, women were able to play an important role in creating and improving their intimate marital relationships. Since negative evaluation in an individual is mostly formed or intensified by the individual's fear of being judged, low abilities, and feelings of inadequacy, reality therapy based on unconditional positive your acceptance ultimately leads to the feeling in the individual that, contrary to negative and distorted thoughts about oneself, one is a person who is good enough and no longer worries about others' evaluation of oneself, reduces negative and distorted thoughts and negative perceptions of oneself, and is less worried than before about people who think unfavorably of them and evaluate and judge them negatively; therefore, by creating your confidence and a pleasant feeling in individuals, it reduces the fear of negative evaluation of others.

Author Contributions: The first author was involved in the overall design and implementation of the study and was responsible for data collection and processing, statistical analysis, interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the initial manuscript. The second author, as the academic supervisor, provided oversight of the scientific and methodological aspects of the study and contributed to the evaluation of the findings, critical revision, and preparation of the final manuscript. The third author, as the academic advisor, contributed to the evaluation of the scientific framework, interpretation of the findings, and substantive revision of the manuscript. All authors participated in the review and approval of the final version of the manuscript.

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Ethical Approval: The study was conducted following ethical review and approval of the research procedures. Throughout the study, participants' rights, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection of personal information were respected. Ethics approval code: [IR.IAU.SHAHROOD.REC.1401.075]