The Effectiveness of an Applied Behavior Analysis Program on Autistic Children's Emotional and Social Skills

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Extended Abstract

Aim
This study's primary objective was to evaluate the efficacy of an applied behavior analysis program on the affective and social skills of autistic children.

Methodology
The research method employed was objective and semi-experimental in terms of data collection, utilizing a pre-test-post-test design and control group follow-up. In 2021, the statistical population of this study consisted of boys aged 4 to 11 in the city of Tehran. Based on a proposal from parents of children with autism in a virtual space, provide eight free sessions of social and communication skills training to children with autism. In addition to accepting the observance of health principles under the conditions of the Covid-19 epidemic and agreeing to participate in the individual skills training sessions, fourteen individuals were assigned in the experimental group out of a total of forty-eight participants. Two of them were eliminated due to personal issues. 12 of the remaining 36 individuals were matched with the experimental group's subjects in terms of age and assigned to the control group. The kindergarten inventory of social/emotional tendencies of preschool children was administered as a pre-test to two groups of children by their mothers. The experimental group received six weeks of training in an applied behavior analysis program (two one-hour sessions per week). Throughout this time period, the control group received no intervention. At the conclusion of six weeks of Kindergarten Social-Emotional Tendencies Inventory, the follow-up phase was concluded by re-administering the questionnaire to the mothers of the two groups of children two months after the conclusion of the interventions, as a post-test and to evaluate the stability of the training effect. Participants had to be between 4 and 11 years old, have an isolation diagnosis from a psychiatrist, and reside in Tehran. The Social and Emotional Disorders Screening Questionnaire (KIST) was used to capture data, with the mother of the children completing it at the pre-test, post-test, and two-month follow-up stages. Individually, the applied behavior analysis program was administered to the experimental group over the course of eight one-hour sessions twice per week.

Findings
Using SPSS-24 and multivariate covariance analysis to analyze the data, the researchers determined that the applied behavior analysis program was able to significantly improve the social and emotional skills of the left-behind children ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion
The follow-up research revealed that this program's influence on social and life skills remained stable, whereas the effect of communication skills on post-test has diminished. A practical behavior analysis program can be used to enhance the social and emotional skills of autistic children based on the findings of this study.

Keywords: Applied Behavior Analysis Program, Autism, Social and Communication Skills.