

Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy on Cognitive Emotion Regulation and Marital Adjustment in Couples with ADHD Children

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by a persistent decrease in attention and an increase in hyperactivity and impulsivity. This pattern typically emerges by age 12 and cannot be attributed to normal developmental stages. The presence of hyperactivity within a family has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes, including emotional difficulties, elevated levels of marital conflict, decreased marital compatibility, and an increased incidence of anxiety, depression, and mental stress among parents. As a result, the parents and caregivers of such children are at a greater risk of experiencing negative consequences and require adequate support and guidance. The objective of this research was to examine the effectiveness of emotion-focused couple therapy in improving cognitive regulation of emotion and marital adjustment among couples with children diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Methodology

The present study employed the A-B-A design, a single-case experimental design that functions as the foundation for other plans. The research consisted of three distinct phases: baseline, intervention, and follow-up. The purpose of the baseline phase (A) was to assess the initial baseline level over three sessions. Participants received a total of eight sessions of educational intervention in emotion-focused couple therapy during phase B. The concluding phase, designated as stage A, included a three-session follow-up stage. The statistical population for this research consisted of all Isfahan-dwelling couples with children diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder in 2018 and 2019. The present investigation selected three couples with a child diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder using a technique of purposive sampling. In this study, the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), the Revised Marital Adjustment Scale (RDAS), and the Parent Form of the fourth edition of the Swanson, Nolan and Pelham Scale (SNAP-IV) were used as instruments. The present study examined the collected data using two levels of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed at the mean and standard deviation levels, whereas inferential statistics were employed via visual analysis, which included intra- and extra-situational analysis. Using the SPSS-20 statistical program, the statistical results were examined.

Findings

The findings indicate that the use of emotion-focused couple therapy has led to an increase in the cognitive regulation of emotion (PND= 66 to 100) among the three couples. Moreover, the aforementioned approach to couple therapy has resulted in a significant enhancement of marital compatibility for all three couples (PND= 100). The data concerning the cognitive regulation of emotion and marital adjustment of all three couples during the follow-up phase demonstrate the intervention's long-term effectiveness.

Conclusion

This therapeutic intervention focuses primarily on the role of emotions in the observed patterns of incompatibility between couples. This approach contributes to the cognitive regulation of emotions by identifying and investigating couples' vulnerable emotions and facilitating their safe reconstruction. During the therapeutic intervention, couples are helped to improve their collaboration, sense of safety, emotional well-being, and erotic connection by meeting each other's needs. Emotion-focused therapy seeks to cultivate and strengthen harmonious interactional patterns between partners, with a focus on mutual support, emotional openness, healthy expression of emotions, self-directed emotional focus, and emotional identification. Increasing the level of engagement in shared activities, recognizing affective interactions, and observing the spouse's attachment-focused customs may increase their marital harmony.

Keywords: Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy, Marital Adjustment.