

The Effectiveness of schema Therapy on Anxiety of Children with Cancer in Online Method

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Cancer is a pervasive concern in the realm of public health and ranks among the most perilous illnesses that can affect individuals of any age. A group of diseases with diverse symptoms, manifestations, treatments, and prognoses are referred to as cancer. Although cancer is a serious condition regardless of age, children have a higher mortality rate than other patients. The aggressive nature of treatments, including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, surgery, and others, in conjunction with the specific disease type, can result in numerous adverse effects over an extended period of time. For children, these may include pain, fatigue, distress, nausea, as well as alterations in sleep patterns and temperament. Numerous individuals, particularly children with low cognitive abilities, get perplexed and defenseless in the face of this ailment, manifesting in a range of psychological disorders and distress, including anxiety. Additionally, frequent hospitalizations isolate children from their social, familial, and educational environments. They become overcome with depression, anxiety, stress and helplessness. To address psychological issues in ailing infants, over the years, numerous psychological interventions have been introduced in addition to pharmaceutical treatment. Schema-based treatments, which identify and treat their principal maladaptive schemas, are one such method. In addition to cognitions, emotions, bodily sensations, and memories, schema comprises a framework, structure, theme, or pattern of cognitive content. The schema-therapeutic approach represents a pivotal development within the field of therapeutic cognition. Numerous researchers, including those who examined the effect of schema therapy on anxiety reduction in cancer patients and patients with chronic diseases, have confirmed its efficacy. Despite the fact that numerous studies have been conducted on the subject, the majority of research on the effects of schema therapy has been on adults, and findings regarding the effects of schema therapy on minors are scant. Given the criticality of developing efficacious interventions to alleviate the distress experienced by children diagnosed with cancer, the objective of this research endeavor was to assess the efficacy of online schema therapy in mitigating anxiety among cancer patients residing in Isfahan.

Methodology

Case study with a single experimental design involving ABA subjects and multiple baselines and follow-ups constituted the current investigation. The statistical sample for the research comprised all children diagnosed with cancer who were under the supervision of the Mahak Institute in Isfahan in 2021. Three of these children were selected purposefully. During three baseline sessions (A), the participants underwent assessments using the Spans Child Anxiety Scale (SCAS) and Rijkeboer & de Boo Schema Inventory for Children (SIC). These subjects were then administered eight 60-minute schema therapy sessions (B) via the Internet, and they were followed up with three sessions (C) one month after the intervention. Finally, SPSS-20 software was utilized to conduct a visual analysis of graphs containing stability, trend, Percentage of Non-overlapping Data (PND), Percentage of Overlapping Data (POD), Means Percentage Improvement (MPI), and Means Percentage Reduction (MPR) indicators.

Findings

The findings indicate that there was a decreasing trend in the mean anxiety scores of subjects 1, 2, and 3 between the baseline and intervention and follow-up stages. Furthermore, the percentage of anxiety score improvement and reduction were as follows: 9% and 8% for subject 1, 10% and 11% for subject 2, and 10% and 11% for subject 3.

Conclusion

By elucidating the problematic behavior, identifying its antecedents and consequences, specifying the situation in which the problem arises, explicating the mentalities, introducing emotions through tools, describing the function of the mentalities, and articulating the benefits and drawbacks of each psyche, schema therapy can simultaneously acquaint afflicted children with emotions. Furthermore, by addressing their emotions, instructing children with cancer on how to convey negative emotions and challenging the thoughts and beliefs of such children, their anxiety will be diminished.

Keywords: Anxiety, Cancer, Children, Schema Therapy.