

The Effectiveness of Play Therapy on Extraverted Problems among Children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Oppositional defiant disorder is one of the behavioral disorders, the most significant manifestation of which is the sustained pattern of repetitive behavior of negativity, stubbornness, disobedience, and hostility to the manifestations of power, which causes significant clinical disruption in academic, social and occupational functioning. The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of play therapy on exogenous problems among children with oppositional defiant disorder.

Materials and Methods: The present study was of applied and semi-experimental design with pretest-posttest and control group. The statistical population of this study included all children with oppositional defiant disorder in Babol in 2019, among whom 60 were selected purposefully and using random sampling method and categorized in two groups of play therapy and control group, each group received 30 people. Data were collected using child behavioral problems questionnaire in three periods of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. Play therapy was performed in ten two-hour weekly sessions for the experimental group. Inferential analysis, univariate analysis of covariance was used via SPSS software version 22. The significance level of the tests was 0.05.

Results: In the experimental group, the mean (SD) of externalizing problems decreased from 40.6 (2.5) in pre-test to 24.6 (2.1) in post-test, and 25.6 (2.5) in the follow-up ($P < 0.001$). However, in the control group, the mean (SD) of externalizing problems increased from 39.4 (1.9) in pre-test to 39.3 (2.1) in post-test, and 39.4 (0.2) in follow-up, which was not significantly different.

Conclusion: The study showed that play therapy reduced exogenous problems among children with oppositional defiant disorder. This treatment can be used to improve psychological problems in children with oppositional defiant disorder.

Keywords: Play therapy; Exogenous problems; Children with oppositional defiant disorder.

Introduction

Oppositional defiant disorder among children can lead to psychological and social incompatibilities in the family, school, and society (1). Children with the oppositional defiant disorder usually do not do well in school and often lack cognitive, social, and emotional skills (2). Most treatments for children and adolescents with behavioral

disorders fall into various approaches: medication, behavioral therapy, psychotherapy, family therapy, group therapy, and play therapy (3). Play therapy is described as a dynamic interpersonal relationship between a child and a trained therapist in the play therapy process that facilitates a safe relationship for the child so that the child seeks playful ways to reduce his or her

emotional disturbances. As the child interacts with the therapist, he or she experiences acceptance, emotional release, reduction of painful effects, reorientation of impulses, and corrected emotional experience. Playing is a means of expression and communication of the child and an essential part of any therapeutic process. Playing connects the child's inner thoughts with his outer world and allows the child to take control of external objects. Playing allows the child to express experiences, thoughts, feelings, and tendencies that threaten him or her (4). Play therapy can be effective in improving children's externalized problems. Child-centered play therapy has a significant effect on anxiety and aggression (5). The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of play therapy on exogenous problems among children with the oppositional defiant disorder.

Materials and methods

The present study was of applied and semi-experimental design with pretest-posttest and control group. The statistical population of this study included all children with the oppositional defiant disorder in Babol in 2019, among whom 60 were selected purposefully and using random sampling method and categorized in two groups of play therapy and control group, each group received 30 people. Data were collected using the child behavioral problems questionnaire (6) in three periods of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. Play therapy was performed in ten two-hour weekly sessions for the experimental group. Inferential analysis, univariate analysis of covariance was used via SPSS software version 22. The significance level of the tests was 0.05.

Results

In the experimental group, the mean (SD) of externalizing problems decreased from 40.6 (2.5) in the pre-test to 24.6 (2.1) in the post-test, and 25.6 (2.5) in the follow-up ($P < 0.001$). However, in the control group, the mean (SD) of externalizing problems increased from 39.4 (1.9) in the pre-test to 39.3 (2.1) in the post-test, and 39.4 (0.2) in follow-up, which was not significantly different.

Discussion

The study showed that in the experimental group, the score of externalized problems increased in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The results of this study were consistent with other studies (5, 7). One of the essential diagnostic symptoms of this disorder is stubbornness and intentional disobedience to parents and other adults (8). In this disorder, there is a clear pattern of hostile and oppositional behaviors towards the authorities, which is not commensurate with the child's level of development and disrupts the child's academic and social performance. In oppositional defiant disorder, conflicting behaviors are much more common in children of the same age than outbursts of anger, irritability, disobedience, and lawless behaviors, but there are no severe aggressive behaviors or severe violations of social norms (9). The prevalence of this disorder is higher in boys before puberty, but after puberty, it is equal in both sexes. In play therapy environment, with therapeutic measures taken about the child's relationships with other people, the child realizes the wrongness of his behavior through the feedback of this treatment, and the treatment process indirectly corrects the undesirable behavior (10).

Conclusion

The study showed that play therapy reduced exogenous problems among children with the oppositional defiant disorder. This treatment can be used to improve psychological problems in children with the oppositional defiant disorder.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank all participants of the study.

Conflict of Interest

None of the authors has any conflict of interest to disclose.

Ethical publication statement

We confirm that we have read the Journal's position on issues involved in ethical publication and affirm that this report is consistent with those guidelines.

Ethical code: IR.IAU.CHALUS.REC.1398.040.

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