

## The Effectiveness of Unified Protocol for Transdiagnostic Treatment on Emotion Regulation in Anxious Pupils and Parenting Methods of Their Mothers

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of unified protocol for transdiagnostic treatment on emotion regulation in anxious pupils and parenting methods of their mothers. The research design was quasi-experimental with pretest-posttest design, control group and two follow-up stages. The statistical population included all girl pupils aged 8 to 10 years in the academic year 2020-2021 in Tehran and their mothers. From the statistical population 30 anxious pupils were identified by purposeful sampling and divided into control and experimental groups randomly. Tools were included Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents and Arjmandnia Parenting Methods Questionnaire. Finding showed that unified protocol for transdiagnostic treatment was effective in improving the emotion regulation skill of anxious pupils and parenting methods of their mothers.

**Keywords:** Child anxiety, emotion regulation, parenting methods, transdiagnostic treatment

### Introduction

Anxiety disorders are the most common childhood mental disorders whose early detection can minimize their long-term effect (Leung, et al., 2019). One of the underlying factors in anxiety disorders is the inability to regulate emotion (Schafer, et al., 2017). It has been found that emotion regulation affects and is affected by various aspects such as self-esteem, social interactions, problem behaviors and parenting styles (Patriitti, et al., 2022). One of the most important and influential factors in how children regulate their emotions is the parenting methods. According to research, authoritative parenting methods that is described by characteristics such as warmth, acceptance and kindness; it is involved in emotion regulation of children and adolescents (Tani, et al., 2018). Various methods have been used to treat emotional disorders in children and adolescents. The unified protocol for transdiagnostic treatment of Barlow, et al. (2017) is one of these therapies that, despite the relatively short time since its introduction, has attracted special attention and growing research shows its effectiveness. Another advantage of this approach is its family-oriented (Barlow, et al., 2018). A review of the research literature indicates a research gap in the variables of this

research. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate this hypothesis: Unified protocol for transdiagnostic treatment is effective in emotion regulation of anxious pupils and parenting methods of their mothers.

## Method

This study was a quasi-experimental with pretest-posttest design, control group and two follow-up stages. The statistical population included all pupils aged 8 to 10 years in the academic year 2020-2021 in Tehran and their mothers. Using purposeful sampling method, 30 anxious pupils were identified and divided into two groups of 15 (control and experimental) randomly. The following tools were used to collect information:

**Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA):** This questionnaire has 10 items and 2 subscales of reappraisal and suppression. The items are scored as a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Gross reported the reliability of this questionnaire (for both strategies) through the retest coefficient of 0.69 (Ioannidis, et al., 2015). In this study, Cronbach alpha for the subscales were 0.71 and 0.63 respectively.

**Arjmandnia Parenting Methods Questionnaire (APMQ):** The questionnaire includes 28 items and 5 subscales of Authoritative parenting, cooperation with spouse in parenting, paternal dependence, egotistic parenting, and family role. It is rated on a 4-point scale ranging. Cronbach alpha for each subscale was reported to be 0.81, 0.79, 0.75, 0.73, and 0.71, respectively (Mohammadi, et al., 2021). In this study, Cronbach alpha for the subscales were 0.79, 0.76, 0.75, 0.69, and 0.70 respectively.

## Results

Demographic data showed that, among 30 pupils participating in this intervention, 15 pupils belonged to the experimental group and 15 pupils belonged to the control group, including 12 second-graders (%40), 13 third-graders (%43) and 5 fourth-graders (%17), that mothers of 9 of these pupils had diploma (%30), 12 associate and bachelor (%40) and 9 master and doctorate (%30). Mean age of pupils was 9.3 years.

According to Table1, in the experimental group, mean scores of authoritative parenting, role of family, cooperation with spouse and reappraisal have increased in post-test. Also mean scores of suppression and dependence on parents, have decreased in post-test.

**Table1. Averages of research variables by groups in four stages measurement**

		group	Pre-test		Post-test		Follow up 1		Follow up 2	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotion Regulation	on suppression	Experimental	16.40	1.53	7.10	1.33	8.60	1.39	9.90	1.48
		Control	15.60	1.83	15.50	1.43	15.10	0.99	15.40	1.07
	reappraisal	Experimental	11.30	1.21	25.30	1.03	21.90	1.41	21.70	1.59

		Control	11.30	0.94	11.20	1.22	10.80	1.54	10.90	1.19
Parenting Methods	<b>democratic parenting</b>	Experimental	18.20	2.58	28.50	1.90	24.10	1.55	23.70	1.52
		Control	18.00	1.63	16.50	1.71	16.30	1.94	16.40	2.31
	<b>cooperation with spouse</b>	Experimental	12.10	2.02	17.40	1.23	15.50	1.05	14.60	0.82
		Control	11.80	1.16	11.00	1.76	11.20	1.16	11.70	1.70
	<b>role of family</b>	Experimental	11.80	1.70	17.50	1.05	15.30	1.21	14.60	0.82
		Control	10.70	1.63	11.10	1.72	10.80	1.81	11.20	1.54
	<b>Authoritative parenting</b>	Experimental	6.70	1.65	13.25	1.21	12.60	1.59	12.90	1.41
		Control	7.70	1.15	18.00	1.56	7.60	1.42	7.30	1.49
	<b>dependence on parents</b>	Experimental	9.00	1.29	5.70	1.03	6.20	0.61	6.50	0.82
		Control	8.90	1.19	8.20	1.87	9.20	1.47	8.90	1.44

Table2 shows that there is a significant difference between subscales of parenting method and emotion regulation variables in pre-test, post-test, follow up1 and follow up2 and in 2groups (experimental, control).

**Table2. ANOVA with repeated-measures in evaluating effect of treatment on emotion regulation and parenting method**

			Total squares	DF	Average squares	F	P	Impact rate
Emotion Regulation	<b>suppression</b>	Test	331.00	1.88	175.71	82.16	0.01	0.74
		Treatment	576.60	1	576.60	143.38	0.01	0.83
		Test*Treatment	301.40	1.88	159.99	74.81	0.01	0.72
Emotion Regulation	<b>reappraisal</b>	Test	708.13	2.66	312.13	154.58	0.01	0.87
		Treatment	2160.00	1	2160.00	681.84	0.01	0.94
		Test*Treatment	764.40	2.26	336.93	210.04	0.01	0.88
Emotion Regulation	<b>democratic parenting</b>	Test	259.25	2.08	124.66	43.71	0.01	0.61
		Treatment	1242.15	1	1242.15	137.39	0.01	0.83
		Test*Treatment	478.99	2.08	230.33	80.76	0.01	0.74
Parenting Methods	<b>cooperation with spouse</b>	Test	68.85	2.43	28.30	13.02	0.01	0.31
		Treatment	322.01	1	322.01	96.20	0.01	0.77
		Test*Treatment	130.98	2.43	53.85	24.78	0.01	0.47
Parenting Methods	<b>role of family</b>	Test	127.40	2.19	57.09	22.19	0.01	0.45
		Treatment	395.26	1	395.26	165.92	0.01	0.85
		Test*Treatment	97.93	2.19	44.59	17.95	0.01	0.39
Parenting Methods	<b>Authoritative parenting</b>	Test	149.38	2.31	64.55	27.58	0.01	0.49
		Treatment	340.81	1	340.81	109.49	0.01	0.79
		Test*Treatment	154.85	2.31	66.91	28.59	0.01	0.50
Parenting Methods	<b>dependence on parents</b>	Test	55.00	3	18.33	13.41	0.01	0.32
		Treatment	101.40	1	101.40	69.93	0.01	0.71
		Test*Treatment	38.73	3	12.91	9.44	0.01	0.25

## Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed that unified protocol for transdiagnostic treatment upgrade emotion regulation skill in anxious pupils and improve parenting methods of their mothers. In explaining these findings, it can be said that this treatment helps anxious children to abandon maladaptive strategies of emotion regulation such as suppression and use adaptive strategies such as reappraisal. The family-oriented view of this program causes parents to receive simultaneous and parallel training in field of emotions, their mechanism of action, how to deal with their children's emotions and healthy parenting. Therefore, both parent-child interaction is improved and their parenting methods are corrected. The sample selected in this study showed that variables of gender, educational level and geographical area are controlled and this is one of the limitations in present study. It is suggested that similar studies be performed with statistical samples in other age groups and with different genders.

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### Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.



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