



Research paper

The Effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy on Distress Tolerance and Perceived Stress of Mothers with Visually Impaired Children

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy on distress tolerance and perceived stress of mothers with visually impaired children. The current research design was a quasi-experimental method with a pre-test, post-test and a control group. The total number of the statistical population was 90 people, 20 of the mothers were selected by convenience sampling method and were randomly replaced in a control group and an experimental group. Intervention was provided to the experimental group in 12 sessions of 60 mins. weekly. Research tools include the Perceived Stress of Cohen, et al. and Distress Tolerance Scale of Simons & Gaher. Analysis of covariance showed that intervention had a positive and significant effect on perceived stress and distress tolerance of participants. It is suggested that psychologists use forgiveness therapy to improve the distress and stress of parents.

Keywords: Distress tolerance, forgiveness therapy, mothers with visually impaired children, perceived stress.

Introduction

Raising and caring for a visually impaired child can have a negative impact on all aspects of parents' lives. Considering that visual impairment affects the mental health, social interaction and daily functioning of children, it is related to the reduction of the quality of life and psychological well-being of their parents. Sometimes children with visual impairments indirectly increase the perceived stress and distress tolerance of parents, especially mothers, due to problems in mobility, education, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities (Hallahan et al., 2023). In such a situation, the ability of parents and especially mothers to tolerate adverse emotional conditions is very important (Barker, 2022). Disability, fatigue, dependence, and coping with vision loss may create higher levels of stress for children with visual impairment and their parents (Braakman & Sterkenburg, 2023). The research results of Kim et al. (2022) and López et al. (2021) showed that forgiveness therapy had a significant effect on reducing anxiety and stress. According to the underlying theory of forgiveness, the ego as a separate sense of self is not only a cognitive structure, but also an emotional structure (Barker, 2022). That is, it is supported not only through concepts but also through feelings. Mothers with visually impaired children have a lot of stress and anxiety. It seems that forgiveness therapy can reduce their perceived stress and distress tolerance. In this regard, the aim of the present study was to determine the effect of forgiveness therapy on the perceived

stress and distress tolerance of these mothers. Therefore, the hypotheses of the current research were:

- Forgiveness therapy has an effect on reducing the perceived stress of mothers with visually impaired children.
- Forgiveness therapy has an effect on increasing the distress tolerance of mothers with visually impaired children.

Method

In the current study, a quasi-experimental method with a pre-test and post-test design was used. The statistical population of this study included 90 mothers of visually impaired children aged 6 to 18 in Isfahan city in 2023-2024. The sample of this research was 20 mothers who were selected by convenience sampling method from Shahid Samani and Shahid Abedi schools for the blind, and were divided into an experimental group and a control group of 10 people. To carry out the research, after the necessary arrangements, the director and consultant of the selected schools were given explanations about the importance of the research. To implement the research, the Distress Tolerance Scale (DTS) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) were completed as a pre-test by participants. Then, the forgiveness therapy intervention was implemented in 12 sessions of 60 minutes for the experimental group. Finally, both groups completed these scales as a post-test. The obtained data were analyzed using the analysis of covariance method in SPSS software version 26.

Tools

Distress Tolerance Scale (DTS): This scale has 15 items and four subscales called tolerance, absorption, assessment and adjustment. The items are scored on a five-point Likert scale and the range of scores is between 15 to 75. Cronbach's alpha for the total score and subscales is 0.91, 0.66, 0.83, 0.85 and 0.77, respectively (Simons and Gaher, 2005). In this research, Cronbach's alpha was 0.96 for the entire scale.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): This scale has 14 items; each item is scored on a five-point Likert scale from 0 to 4. The score of this scale is between 0 and 56. The internal consistency coefficients of the total score of the scale were reported as 0.85 and its criterion validity between 0.35 and 0.49 (Cohen et al., 1983). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.94.

The Forgiveness Therapy Intervention. The goals of the forgiveness therapy intervention included preparation, description of resentment, story reconstruction, wound healing, perspective change and positive intention (Barker, 2022).

Results

The results of the Shapiro-Wilks test indicated that the normality of the distribution of the distress tolerance and perceived stress scores is normal ($P < 0.05$). Levine's test indicated homogeneity of variances ($P > 0.05$). For this reason, Univariate Analysis of Covariance

(ANCOVA) was used to determine the effect of the intervention on perceived stress, the results of which are reported in Table 1. Results showed that the intervention had a significant effect on the perceived stress of the participants ($P < 0.01$).

Table 1. Results of ANCOVA of the perceived stress

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Eta ²	Test power
Pre-test	3656.23	1	3656.23	374.96	0.01	0.95	1.00
Group	367.25	1	367.25	37.66	0.01	0.68	1.00
Error	165.76	17	9.75				
Total	49922.00	20					

ANCOVA test was also used to explore the effect of the intervention on distress tolerance, the results of which are reported in Table 2. Results showed that the intervention had a significant effect on the distress tolerance of the participants ($P < 0.01$).

Table 2. Results of MANCOVA of the distress tolerance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Eta ²	Test power
Pre-test	877.97	1	877.97	170.14	0.01	0.90	1.00
Group	143.44	1	143.44	27.79	0.01	0.62	0.99
Error	87.72	17	5.16				
Total	19595.00	20					

Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicated a significant effect of the forgiveness therapy on distress tolerance and perceived stress of mothers with visually impaired children. To explain this finding, it can be said that in forgiveness therapy, mothers with visually impaired children were taught to prepare for forgiveness. They learned to reduce resentment and take responsibility for their own and their child’s feelings. Forgiveness therapy made mothers strengthen their ability to pay attention to the adverse effects of resentment factors and thus control and manage their subsequent stress. Stress in mothers of visually impaired children is caused by a negative attitude towards themselves, non-acceptance of their child, and excessive responsibilities in taking care of him. While forgiveness therapy can bring them to a new understanding and reduce their perceived stress. Since the most important principle in the forgiveness process is dealing with feelings related to painful experiences or events and the ability to resolve them, even the ability to let go of negative feelings, it can be used to improve distress tolerance. Among the limitations of the current research, we can mention the use of convenience sampling method, the implementation of the research only for mothers, and the lack of generalizability of the results. It is suggested to use random sampling methods. In addition to the pre-test and post-test phase, it is appropriate to consider the follow-up phase for the stability of the intervention effect.

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Conflicts of interest

Authors found no conflict of interests.



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