

Effectiveness of the Parenting Effectiveness Training Package on the Parent-Child Relationship in Children Aged 6 to 12 with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Iravani, E., Faramarzi, S., & Rezaei Jamaloei, H. (2024). Effectiveness of the Parenting Effectiveness Training Package on the Parent-Child Relationship in Children Aged 6 to 12 with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. *Applied Family Therapy Journal*, 5(5), 78-84.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.5.5.9>



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of parenting effectiveness training on the parent-child relationship in children aged 6 to 12 with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Method: The research employed a quasi-experimental design using a pretest-posttest framework with a control group (one experimental group and one control group). The statistical population comprised male and female students aged 6 to 12 years with ADHD in Isfahan during the 2022-2023 academic year. The research sample consisted of 32 parents and students with ADHD, who were purposefully selected and randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. Participants were chosen based on research inclusion criteria. The Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) program included 8 training sessions for parents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. At the descriptive level, frequency tables, percentage distributions, mean, and standard deviation were calculated. At the inferential level, after verifying the assumptions for parametric testing, univariate and multivariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA and MANCOVA) were performed.

Findings: The results indicated that parenting effectiveness training had a significant effect on the parent-child relationship at the $p < .05$ level.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that parenting effectiveness training positively influences the parent-child relationship in children aged 6 to 12 with ADHD and is an effective intervention method.

Keywords: parent-child relationship, parenting effectiveness, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

1. Introduction

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a developmental and chronic neurodevelopmental disorder that typically begins in childhood and can be diagnosed as early as the preschool years (Wagner & McNeil, 2015). ADHD is one of the most prevalent disorders among children and adolescents (Biederman & Faraone, 2005), with a global prevalence rate estimated at 5.29% (Polanczyk et al., 2007). This disorder negatively impacts academic performance, social and emotional development, and can lead to academic failure and emotional issues such as anxiety and depression (Faraone & Biederman, 2005; Mulsow et al., 2014). Symptoms of ADHD, including poor impulse control, distractibility, hyperactivity, concentration difficulties, and behavioral and interpersonal issues, further complicate children's lives (Bennett et al., 2010).

Children with ADHD often face significant challenges in social adaptation, which can lead to difficulties in emotional, academic, and social domains (Freilich & Shechtman, 2010). Research by Linley and Joseph (2009) demonstrated that teaching students with ADHD how to control and manage their emotions can enhance self-awareness, improve relationships with others, and positively affect physical, mental, and emotional health. A crucial factor influencing the severity of symptoms in hyperactive children is their relationship with their parents. Given the importance of childhood in personality development, it is expected that parent-child relationships significantly influence a child's psychological and social growth (Linley & Joseph, 2009).

Experiences with primary caregivers during infancy and childhood are fundamental in shaping an individual's relationships with themselves and others. Parent-child interaction serves as the child's first experience of social communication and is vital for creating a sense of security and love (Rostad & Whitaker, 2016). Children rely on interactions with their parents to understand social structures, making these interactions essential for healthy development. The parent-child relationship encompasses unique behaviors, emotions, and expectations shared between parents and their children (Babore et al., 2016). Improving the quality of parent-child interactions aims to reduce behavioral issues, promote socially acceptable behavior, enhance parenting skills, and lower parental stress (Atar et al., 2024; Cerniglia, 2024; Damodaran, 2015).

The quality of parental relationships, particularly the mother-child bond, is crucial for a child's mental health. Therefore, parent training is recognized as a valuable, multidimensional intervention capable of managing behavioral disorders in children and adolescents (Heydari et al., 2018). Studies indicate that intimate and appropriate parent-child interactions significantly impact children's mental well-being (Ferreira et al., 2024; Gassman-Pines et al., 2020; Hollenstein et al., 2017; Kochendorfer & Kerns, 2017; Parrigon & Kerns, 2017). A nurturing relationship can foster a well-rounded, healthy individual, while a dysfunctional relationship can result in various psychological disorders and suffering (Khanjani, 2005). Among family members, the mother holds a primary role in a child's development, both during the prenatal period and afterward. The mother's personality and communication style are especially influential in the child's growth (Amir et al., 2012).

Various therapeutic approaches have been explored to address the needs of children with ADHD. One such intervention is Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), a comprehensive program that equips parents with skills to enhance communication and resolve parent-child conflicts constructively. Gordon's (2000) program emphasizes the parent-child relationship as a core element of treatment (Gordon, 2000). Research has demonstrated that PET reduces behavioral problems, enhances family relationships (Lundahl et al., 2006), improves parent-child interactions (Leung et al., 2011), and develops children's skills (Shek & Keung, 2006). Despite various strategies for empowering children with ADHD and their parents, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (Braswell & Bloomquist, 1991), emotion regulation, and mindfulness training, the specific impact of Gordon's PET on parents of children with ADHD has not been extensively examined.

The primary aim of this research is to assess the impact of Parent Effectiveness Training on the parent-child relationship in children aged 6 to 12 with ADHD. This study seeks to determine whether PET can improve these relationships.

The research hypothesis posits that Parent Effectiveness Training will significantly impact the parent-child relationship in children aged 6 to 12 with ADHD.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, utilizing a pretest-posttest framework with a control group and a follow-up period, to achieve its research objectives. The statistical population included all male and female students aged 6 to 12 with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Isfahan, who were enrolled during the 2022-2023 academic year. The research sample consisted of 32 parents of students selected through a multi-stage sampling method and randomly assigned to the experimental group ($n = 16$) and control group ($n = 16$). The experimental group received Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) over eight sessions, while the control group did not receive any intervention.

Participants were recruited by referring to medical centers for children with special needs across the six educational districts of Isfahan. After reviewing their backgrounds, students were initially screened using the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fourth Edition (WISC-IV). For final selection, clinical interviews were conducted, and 32 parents of children diagnosed with ADHD were purposefully chosen and randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The experimental group participated in Gordon's (2000) Parent Effectiveness Training, which was delivered in eight two-hour sessions to parents of children with ADHD.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Parent-Child Relationship

This scale comprises 33 items assessing parents' perceptions of their relationship with their child, covering areas of closeness, dependence, conflict, and the overall positive mother-child relationship. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (completely agree) to 1 (completely disagree). The overall positive relationship score is calculated by summing the scores for closeness and the inverse scores for conflict and dependence. In Monfared's (2011) study, the scale's validity and reliability were confirmed through construct validity using confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients were 0.74 for closeness, 0.50 for dependence, and 0.87 for conflict (Monfared, 2011).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Parent Effectiveness Training (PET)

This training program, based on Gordon's (2000) approach, consists of eight group sessions designed for parents (Gordon, 2000).

Session 1: The session begins with an introduction to the program, outlining the objectives and structure of future meetings. Participants complete pre-tests to assess the initial state of the parent-child relationship. The session covers the concept of acceptance, emphasizing its importance in parenting. Parents learn the art of listening, which involves giving undivided attention and showing empathy. Practical techniques for demonstrating acceptance in interactions with children are introduced.

Session 2: This session reviews the content of the first meeting, reinforcing key concepts. Parents are taught the art of active listening, which involves listening with empathy and understanding rather than judgment. Common mistakes made when attempting active listening are discussed, such as interrupting or offering unsolicited advice. The session emphasizes the negative impact of listening without empathy on the child's emotional well-being.

Session 3: The session begins with a review of active listening techniques from the previous meeting. The focus shifts to the connection between active listening by parents and children's willingness to engage and communicate more openly. Participants learn to recognize ineffective parenting responses and how they can shut down communication. Non-verbal communication cues are explored, and parents discuss how body language and tone of voice can influence their child's behavior and feelings.

Session 4: After a review of prior material, the session addresses modifying unacceptable child behavior by altering the environment. Strategies include enriching or simplifying the child's surroundings to foster positive behavior. Techniques for substituting one activity for another as a means of redirecting behavior are taught, along with methods to help children adapt to environmental changes in a supportive way.

Session 5: This session reviews environmental strategies and transitions into discussing the inevitable conflicts between parents and children, emphasizing the question: "Who should win?" Participants examine how different parental approaches can impact a child's motivation and self-esteem. The "no-loser" method for conflict resolution is introduced, providing a balanced approach where both parent and child feel understood and respected.

Session 6: Parents review the conflict resolution techniques covered in the previous session and are introduced to the "six unfailing steps" method for teaching children effectively. This structured approach emphasizes consistency, clarity, and reinforcement to promote desired behaviors and skills in children.

Session 7: The focus of this session is on parental values and the role of parents as both role models and counselors. Techniques are discussed for parents to self-reflect and model behaviors they wish to see in their children. Strategies for preventing conflicts and improving the child's interaction with their environment are presented, emphasizing the importance of self-acceptance and being more accepting toward the child.

Session 8: The final session reviews all previous content, reinforcing key concepts and techniques. Participants identify environmental factors that influence their child's development and discuss practical solutions for fostering

effective parent-child interactions. Post-tests are conducted to evaluate the impact of the training program and measure progress in improving parent-child relationships.

2.4. Data Analysis

The parent-child relationship variable was measured at the pretest, posttest, and follow-up stages. Descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, frequency percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were employed. For inferential analysis, ANCOVA and MANCOVA were conducted using SPSS version 23, following a check of the assumptions for parametric tests.

3. Findings and Results

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, followed by inferential statistical analyses to address the research question.

Table 1

Comparison of Mean and Standard Deviation of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Parent-Child Relationship Across Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Follow-Up Stages

Group	Stage	M	SD
Experimental Group	Pre-test	87.12	22.06
	Post-test	113.18	20.66
	Follow-up	134.00	27.08
Control Group	Pre-test	91.50	18.46
	Post-test	91.75	17.84
	Follow-up	91.68	18.04

The findings indicate that the mean scores for parent-child relationships in the experimental group increased in the post-test and follow-up stages compared to the control group (Table 1).

The analysis of the homogeneity of regression slopes for parenting stress, the parent-child relationship, and ADHD symptom improvement indicated no significant interaction between the pre-test scores and group assignment. The sum of squares for the interaction term (Group * Parent-Child Relationship Pre-Test) was 594.758, with a mean square of 198.253, resulting in an F-value of 0.593 and a significance level of 0.624. This result confirms that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was satisfied, supporting the validity of the covariance analysis.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to assess the normality of the parent-child relationship scores for children aged 6 to 12 with ADHD in both the experimental and control groups. The experimental group had a test

statistic of 0.172 with a significance level of 0.200, and the control group had a test statistic of 0.114 with a significance level of 0.200. These results indicate that the parent-child relationship scores for both groups followed a normal distribution, meeting the assumption required for further statistical analysis.

Levene's test was used to verify the equality of variances for parent-child relationship scores among children aged 6 to 12 with ADHD. The results confirmed the assumption of homogeneity of variances, indicating that the variances were equal across groups.

To examine the effectiveness of Parent Effectiveness Training on the parent-child relationship, a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted. The assumptions of the analysis were verified.

The analysis revealed that Box's M value for preoccupied attachment ($p = .021$) and dismissive attachment ($p = .014$) was significant, indicating that the assumption of

homogeneity of covariance matrices was not met for these variables. Nevertheless, considering the relatively large group sizes and equal participant numbers, this issue can be overlooked. Additionally, the Mauchly's test chi-square

value for secure attachment ($p = .022$) was significant, suggesting a violation of the sphericity assumption. Consequently, degrees of freedom were adjusted using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

Table 2

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) for parent-child relationship scores in the studied groups

Source	Test	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance Level	η (eta)	Statistical Power
Pre-Test	Post-Test	807.821	1	807.821	3.272	0.077	0.069	0.425
	Follow-Up	327.329	1	327.329	0.810	0.373	0.018	0.142
Group	Post-Test	19,337.352	2	9,668.676	39.168	0.001	0.640	1.000
	Follow-Up	20,056.070	2	10,028.035	24.826	0.001	0.530	1.000
Error	Post-Test	10,861.554	44	246.853				
	Follow-Up	17,773.109	44	403.934				
Total	Post-Test	685,714	48					
	Follow-Up	741,303	48					

Table 2 demonstrates a significant difference between the groups at $p < .05$. The higher mean scores for the experimental group in the post-test and follow-up stages indicate that the Parent Effectiveness Training effectively improved the parent-child relationship.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) package on the parent-child relationship in children aged 6 to 12 years with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The results indicated that PET is an effective intervention for enhancing parent-child relationships among parents of children with ADHD. These findings align with previous research (Abdullahi & Tahir, 2014; Amir et al., 2012; Damodaran, 2015; Gordon, 2000; Hatamifar et al., 2019; Heydari et al., 2018; Leung et al., 2011; Lundahl et al., 2006; Mikaili Mani & Haghi, 2013; Nili Ahmadabadi et al., 2019; Olson et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2021; Vahid & Khanjani, 2014).

Goleman (1996) emphasized that emotional and social competence are more critical for personal, professional, and academic success than cognitive abilities. Students who experience anxiety, anger, or depression struggle to learn effectively, as these emotional states hinder the efficient use of incoming information (Goleman, 1996). One effective psychological treatment for ADHD involves behavioral training for parents, which helps reduce children's behavioral symptoms. Since parents have significant and frequent contact with their children, emotional and behavioral interventions implemented within the child's natural environment can be highly impactful in promoting

recovery. Research by Johnston, Hommersen, and Seipp (2008), as well as Gerdes, Haack, and Schnider (2010), has underscored the importance of parental behavioral training in reducing ADHD symptoms (Johnston et al., 2008).

For parents to be effective, they must possess adequate knowledge about their child's behavior and understand the underlying causes of behavioral problems. Consequently, parent education has been widely recognized as one of the most effective therapeutic methods for addressing various aspects of children's behavior (Johnston et al., 2008). Evidence suggests that psychosocial interventions, such as behavioral training for parents, help them manage stress more effectively and reduce ADHD symptoms in their children (Gerdes et al., 2010). Several training programs have focused on enhancing parents' ability to engage positively with their children, emphasizing both external and internal aspects of child behavior, while also considering the parents' behavioral dynamics (Barkley et al., 2004; Chronis et al., 2004).

Given the prevalence and severity of behavioral disorders in children with ADHD, which often create substantial challenges for families, Parent Effectiveness Training is recommended as a viable intervention for improving parent-child relationships. It could be implemented in clinics or specialized centers dedicated to the treatment of ADHD.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

Like any scientific study, this research has limitations. One limitation is the age range of participants, which included only children aged 6 to 12. Thus, caution is advised when generalizing the findings to older age groups. Additionally, the sample size was limited to 32 participants,

so generalizations to the broader population should be made carefully. Most studies in this field have focused on typical samples, and there is a scarcity of domestic research on ADHD interventions. Future studies should consider applying the PET package to parents of children with other neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism, to evaluate its impact on children's anxiety and performance.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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