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Comparing the Effectiveness of Play Therapy and Problem Solving Training on Responsibility, Distress Tolerance and Adjustment of 5-7-Year-Old Children

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Abstract

Purpose: There are many intervention methods to improve children's psychological characteristics, which in this study attempt to compare the two methods of play therapy and problem solving training. As a result, the aim of this study was to comparing the effectiveness of play therapy and problem solving training on responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children.

Methodology: This study was a semi-experimental with a pretest, posttest and two-month follow-up design with experimental and control groups. The research population was 5-7-year-old children who referred to counseling and psychological services centers and clinics of Tehran city in 2021 year. Among the members of the population, 45 people were selected by available sampling method and replaced by simple random with the help of lottery in three equal groups including play therapy, problem solving training and control groups. The first experimental group trained 10 sessions with the play therapy method and the second experimental group trained 10 sessions with the problem solving training method and the control group during this period did not receive any training. The data were collected with the California responsibility inventory (Gough, 1951), distress tolerance scale (Simons and Gaher, 2005) and adjustment scale (Matson et al, 1983) and were analyzed with the methods of analysis variance with repeated measures and Bonferroni post hoc test in SPSS software.

Findings: The findings showed that both methods of play therapy and problem solving training in compared to the control group improved responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children and the results remained in the follow-up phase ($P < 0.001$). Also, there was no significant difference between the two methods of play therapy and problem solving training in improving responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children in the posttest and follow-up phases ($P > 0.05$).

Conclusion: The results of this study indicated the effectiveness of both methods of play therapy and problem solving training on improving responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children. Therefore, therapists, psychologists and counselors along with other treatment methods can use both methods of play therapy and problem solving training for their interventions.



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Detailed abstract

Purpose: The family is the main center of children's growth and fostering, and the role of the family in children's personality is very important and vital. Childhood is one of the most important stages of people's lives, where in personality is founded and formed, and most of the disorders and inconsistencies are the result of lack of attention during childhood. One of the areas that children need to be educated in is increasing responsibility and it means a person's internal obligation and commitment to carry out the activities, choices, decisions and duties that he is responsible for. Responsibility is one of the most important factors impact on growth, and such people can communicate with others and adapt to the environment and others by accepting responsibility and social skills. Another area that children need to be trained in is increasing distress tolerance, which as a meta-emotional construct means the ability and capability of a person to experience and resist negative emotional states. Distress tolerance has a multidimensional nature and includes the ability to tolerate, evaluate and accept the emotional state, regulate emotion by the individual and draw attention to negative emotions and its role in causing dysfunction. This construct impact on the evaluation and consequences of experiencing negative emotions, and people with low distress tolerance show stronger reactions in response to stress, have weaker coping abilities, and seek to avoid facing emotions. Among other areas where children need to be trained in we can mention increasing adjustment, which means the ability of people to cope with the changing and transformative conditions of the internal and external environment. In the another definition, adjustment means matching and interacting effectively with the environment and having positive feelings about oneself and others, participating in various activities, feeling relaxed in ambiguous and unfamiliar situations, enjoying life and being able to influence others. The play therapy method is a one of the ways to improve psychological characteristics. The play connects the child's inner thoughts with the outside world, and the child with its help can control and manage the outside environment and relieve himself. Play therapy is a dynamic interpersonal relationship between the child and the trained therapist through play, which provides the basis for creating a safe relationship for the child to fully express himself. Play therapy is a method that helps children to know themselves and their capabilities and to be able to solve problems and challenges in their lives. The problem solving training is another method of improving psychological characteristics. Problem solving is a cognitive process which through it a person tries to find a suitable and desirable solution to a problem. In the method of problem solving training, training begins with focusing on the goals of the present time, and this is a prelude to encourage people to focus on the problem and look for suitable solutions to deal with problematic and challenging situations. Problem solving training is a cognitive-behavioral process that provides a variety of new and innovative answers to deal with problematic and challenging situations and provides the possibility to choose and implement the best and most effective solution. There are many intervention methods to improve children's psychological characteristics, which in this study attempt to compare the two methods of play therapy and problem solving training. As a result, the aim of this study was to comparing the effectiveness of play therapy and problem solving training on responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children.

Methodology: This study was a semi-experimental with a pretest, posttest and two-month follow-up design with experimental and control groups. The research population was 5-7-year-old children who referred to counseling and psychological services centers and clinics of Tehran city in 2021 year. Among the members of the population, 45 people were selected by available sampling method and replaced by simple random with the help of lottery in three equal groups including play therapy, problem solving training and control groups. The inclusion criteria to the research were included the ability to understand the Persian language, willingness and informed consent to participate in the research and completion of the research ethics form by parents, age group 5 to 7 years, the absence of obvious disorders in the five senses, not having experienced the acute effects of a

psychological disorder or medical and non-diagnosis of psychological disorders such as mood disorders and the exclusion criteria from the research were included the hospitalization of children during the study period, suffering from a psychological disease during the study period, refusal to continue cooperation and absence of more than two sessions. The first experimental group trained 10 sessions with the play therapy method and the second experimental group trained 10 sessions with the problem solving training method and the control group during this period did not receive any training. The data were collected with the California responsibility inventory (Gough, 1951), distress tolerance scale (Simons and Gaher, 2005) and adjustment scale (Matson et al, 1983). In the present study, the reliability value of the California responsibility inventory, distress tolerance scale and adjustment scale were calculated by Cronbach's alpha method as 0.78, 0.81, and 0.86, respectively. Also, data were analyzed with the methods of analysis variance with repeated measures and Bonferroni post hoc test in SPSS software.

Findings: The findings showed that both methods of play therapy and problem solving training in compared to the control group improved responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children and the results remained in the follow-up phase ($P < 0.001$). Also, there was no significant difference between the two methods of play therapy and problem solving training in improving responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children in the posttest and follow-up phases ($P > 0.05$).

Conclusion: The results of this study indicated the effectiveness of both methods of play therapy and problem solving training on improving responsibility, distress tolerance and adjustment of 5-7-year-old children. Therefore, therapists, psychologists and counselors along with other treatment methods can use both methods of play therapy and problem solving training for their interventions.