



EFFECTIVENESS OF CBT TECHNIQUES TO STRENGTHEN EMOTION REGULATION AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN

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Abstract

According to American Psychological Association (APA) Emotion is defined as a complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioural and physiological elements. CBT techniques can help young children to strengthen Emotion Regulation and Self-Regulation by reframe how they identify, interpret and evaluate their Emotional and Behavioural reactions to negative experiences. The aim of the study is effectiveness of CBT techniques to strengthen Emotion Regulation among young children. The objective is to try out the intervention program planned for presenting it to the participants in the main investigation and gain efficiency in conducting the sessions. The samples were collected from 3 to 6 age group young children only from Mettu street, TVK village in Villupuram district, the sample size is (n=10) were selected for the experimental group. The Pre Quasi experimental research design was used for the proposed study and participants were selected based on Purposive sampling. The instruments used were Preschool Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale (PreBERS) by Michael H. Epstein, Lori Synhorst, (2009) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA) by Gross and John, (2003). The CBT techniques were implemented to the young children for 6 weeks and then the effectiveness of CBT techniques was analysed by using paired t-test. The result revealed that the present study demonstrates that CBT techniques were effective in enhancing Emotion Regulation among young children.

Keywords: *Self-regulation, Emotional regulation, Young children, CBT techniques.*

INTRODUCTION

Emotion regulation means the capacity to recognize and appropriately control one's emotions is known as emotional regulation. Children are more capable of handling challenging circumstances when they have the ability to control their emotions. They are more resilient to setbacks. They are less prone to feeling stressed or

overwhelmed. Due to their ability to employ coping mechanisms, individuals are more likely to feel at ease and in charge. Emotion regulation pertains to the way individuals control their feelings for both private and public domains. Due to its centrality to social competence, psychological wellness and the risk of emotional psychopathology, this multidimensional and complicated process is vital for development. The early neurobiological growth, temperamental personality, and the early child's conceptual knowledge of emotion, emotion management techniques, and sense of self all influence the development of emotion regulation. The quality of the parent-child relationship, parental coaching, modelling, direct interventions, dialogue, and the particular influences of peers and siblings are among the social variables that also shape it. For young children, emotion regulation entails imparting fundamental abilities to detect, comprehend, and effectively regulate their emotions. As the first step in this process, assist kids with recognizing and labelling emotions.

Contemporary psychology considers emotion regulation a central component of mental health, and its imbalances might underlie several mental disorders (Berenbaum et al., 2003; Mennin and Farach, 2007). Emotion regulation includes all of the conscious and non-conscious strategies we use to increase, to maintain or decrease one or more components of an emotional response (Gross, 1998). Originally, trying to bring together ideas from psychoanalysis and the field of stress and coping behaviours, Gross developed a process or time model of emotion regulation, in which emotions can be modulated in five different stages:

- Selecting a situation,
- Modifying a situation,
- Deployment of attention,
- Changing cognition (cognitive reappraisal) and
- Modulating the experience, behaviour or physiological response (Gross, 2001).

The way the parents behave, how they feel about children, and how they treat them all have a direct impact on how well the kids learn to control their emotions. Parents that provide their children suitable surroundings and behavioural patterns get several benefits throughout their lives. One could argue that children in the disadvantaged group are those who do not live in comparable circumstances. One may make a number of recommendations for helping kids learn how to control their emotions. It is crucial for parents to acknowledge the unique personality features and temperaments of their kids and model suitable behaviour patterns. Parents may receive informational training in this situation. Both at home and in a school context, exercises involving the comprehension and expression of emotions may be conducted.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT):

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a psychotherapeutic approach aimed at identifying and modifying negative thought patterns and behaviours that contribute to psychological distress. It emphasizes the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and it is supported by numerous studies for its effectiveness in treating various mental health conditions, such as anxiety disorders, depression, and PTSD. [Beck, J. S. (2011), Cognitive behaviour therapy: Basics and beyond]. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) adapted for young children is a specialized intervention aimed at promoting emotion regulation and Self-

Regulation skills in this population. Through age-appropriate activities like play therapy, storytelling, and interactive exercises, CBT helps children recognize, understand, and manage their emotions effectively. By teaching strategies such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and positive self-talk, CBT equips children with tools to cope with difficult emotions and regulate their behaviour. Research by Weisz and colleagues (2006) has shown the effectiveness of CBT interventions in improving emotion regulation and self-regulation among young children, highlighting its potential to foster resilience and emotional well-being in this developmental stage. This approach not only addresses immediate emotional concerns but also lays a foundation for long-term psychological health and adaptive functioning. Additionally, the importance of incorporating CBT-based strategies into parenting and caregiving practices, empowering parents and caregivers to support children's emotional regulation and self-regulation at home. Clinically, the findings can inform therapeutic approaches for child psychologists and counsellors, advocating for the integration of CBT techniques into interventions aimed at addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties in young children. Ultimately, the study prompts further research into cultural considerations and the specific mechanisms underlying the efficacy of CBT techniques, aiming to develop more tailored interventions and deepen our understanding of how to best support young children in their emotional and behavioural development.

Purpose of the study

Emotion Regulation a central component of mental health and its imbalance might underline several mental disorders (Berenbaum, 2003). Self-Regulation includes executive functioning, attentional control and decision making skills these two domain behavioural regulation. Then Self-Regulation has been linked to future socioeconomic achievement, mental health and academic success (Murray, 2015). Children with higher level of Self-Regulation can result in more adaptable, cooperative and capable of accomplishing their goals (Posner and Rothbart, 2007) but conversely, maladjustment, behavioural problems and even socioeconomic problems have been linked to lower levels of Self-Regulation. The first five year of life, there is a significant shift in Self-Regulation abilities and capacity, partly due to the development of motor and cognitive skills, According to the researcher enhancing Emotional Regulation Self-Regulation is crucial for young children to enhance good mental health of regulating emotions and to learn about the world around them to acquire the fundamental Self-Regulation skills. The study aims to summarize the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) techniques to enhance Emotion Regulation and Self-Regulation.

The significance of the study

The significance of a study investigating the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques in bolstering Emotion Regulation among young children is multifaceted. Firstly, Emotion Regulation skills are crucial for children's socio-emotional development, academic achievement, and long-term well-being. Therefore, understanding effective interventions to enhance these skills holds immense importance for educators, parents, and policymakers. Secondly, early childhood is a critical period for the development of regulatory capacities, and interventions during this time can have lasting effects on children's emotional and behavioral adjustment. By investigating the efficacy of CBT techniques in this context, the study has the

potential to inform early intervention strategies and preventive efforts aimed at promoting children's mental health and resilience. Furthermore, given the rising prevalence of mental health challenges among young children, including anxiety and behaviour disorders, identifying evidence-based interventions like CBT can contribute to the optimization of mental health services for this population. The significance of this research work is allowed the young children to perform their ability and to sit, pay attention, listen for learning and control impulses that may otherwise be deemed socially inappropriate.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review done to clarify this previous research of journals, articles, scholarly books and other sources of research. Conducting a literature review should enable a researcher to find out what research has already been done and identify what is unknown within the researcher's topic. So, the studies of related literature place a vital role in the field of research in psychology. Literature review as a critical description and appraisal of a topic (Jessson, 2011).

Amani F Qashmer (2023) conducted a study on Emotion Regulation among 4-6 old children and its association with their peer relationship in Jordan. The study aimed to investigate the association between Emotion Regulation and peer relationship in 4-6 year old children. The sample of this study were 300 children (170 girls and 130 boys) studying in kinder garden. The instruments used were Emotion Regulation Scale (ERC) was used to measure ER and the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation (SCBE) Scale was utilized to assess peer relationships. The method of this study was adopted the correlational descriptive method. The result revealed that a positive relationship between Emotion Regulation and positive poles of peer relationship.

Ritwik Khurana and Saakshi single (2021) aimed a study on studying the Impact of Indian Urban parenting on Emotion Regulation in female children and adolescents during COVID-19: A cultural Analysis. This study aims to analyze and evaluate the impact of parenting styles on Emotion Regulation in young girls and adolescents residing in an urban area of Delhi, India. The participants (n=12) were recruited randomly through a pool of prospective families, consisting of the mother, father and the first-born female offspring from the ages 4 to 18. The research design was conducted by the multiple base line design. The instruments were the parenting style questionnaire and difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale are used. The result showed that the Indian family functions in a complicated manner, the targeted young children reported an average level of difficulty in Emotion Regulation skills as compared to their adolescent counterparts, caused by a new style of parenting which comprises of mixed parenting styles with a focus towards maintaining cultural values and social norms.

Maryam Sedighi, Ghasem Naziry (2020) evaluated a study on the effectiveness of Emotion Regulation training on reducing aggressive and oppositional behavior among children aged 4-6 years. The aim of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of Emotion Regulation skills training on reducing aggressive and oppositional behaviors in children. The participant consists of 26 children 4-6 age group with symptoms of

aggressive and oppositional behaviors. The quasi-experimental study with a pre-test and post-test design to compare an experimental group with a control group. The child symptom Inventory (CSI-4) and aggression questionnaire were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed MANCOVA by using SPSSV.23 software. The result revealed that covariance analysis showed that Emotion Regulation training was effective in reducing aggressive and oppositional training was effective in reducing aggressive and oppositional behavior among children ($P < 0.01$).

Pauline louse slot, Hanna Mulder, Josje, Verhagen, Paul P.M Leseman (2017) a study conducted on Preschooler's cognitive and emotional self-regulation in Pretend play: Relations with executive functions and quality of play. The aim of this study was to investigate the degree to which 3 year old showed cognitive and emotional Self-Regulation in a naturalistic play setting. The quality of pretend play was strongly associated with cognitive self-regulation and to a lesser extent, Emotional Self-Regulation. The result of this study suggested that both preschooler's cool executive functions and the quality of play contributed to their Self-Regulation skills in naturalistic settings.

METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the study

Thus, objectives play a crucial role in shaping research methodologies and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in a particular field (Kumar, 2014).

The following objectives were formulated based on the problem. The objectives of the present study were:

- ❖ To assess the level of Emotion Regulation and Self-Regulation among young children
- ❖ To analyze the effectiveness of CBT techniques on enhancing Emotion Regulation and Self-Regulation among young children
- ❖ To investigate the effectiveness of the CBT techniques among young children with respect to demographic variables.
- ❖ To evaluate the effectiveness of CBT techniques among young children comparing pre-test and post-test.

Hypothesis

Hypotheses play a crucial role in the research process, helping researchers to formulate research questions, design studies, and interpret results (Kumar, 2014).

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives of the study.

- There will be no significant difference between the Emotion Regulation and in the pre-test and post-test after administering the CBT techniques.

Research design

The research design used for the proposed study is **quasi-experimental research with pre-test, post-test design**. An experimental group will be used to assess the effectiveness of the intervention programme. The participants of the experiment are 10. They were assigned based on purposive selection.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique for this study was selected by purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling. It is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys.

Sample size

The sample has been collected for this study was 15 samples and only participants with low level of Emotional and Self-Regulation were chosen. The sample for the present study was 10 participants.

Criteria for selecting sampling

Inclusion criteria:

- The participants are 3 to 6 age group young children
- The participants are normal young children
- Both male and female children
- The participants are identified with low level of Emotion Regulation and Self-Regulation
- The participants are only from (Mettu street) TVK village.

Exclusion criteria:

- Participants with high level of Emotion Regulation and Self-Regulation
- Age group above 6.

Instruments used

The following instrument is used for data collection

- The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA) by Gross and John, (2003).

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ – CA)

- **Description and scoring method**

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA) was developed by (Gross and John, 2003) and has been translated and validated in Chinese samples (Wang, 2020). The ERQ-CA is a 10-items questionnaire and it is designed to assess habitual use of two common emotion regulation strategies, the two dimensions are

- **Cognitive Reappraisal (CR)** = 6 items
- **Expressive Suppression (ES)** = 4 items

Separate scale scores can be derived from the ERQ-CA for each of these strategies, with higher scores indicating higher usage of that strategy. High usage of cognitive reappraisal is typically associated with good well-being and interpersonal outcomes, whereas high usage of expressive suppression is typically associated with poor well-being and interpersonal outcomes (Gross & John, 2003).

Procedure

The data was collected from 3-6 age group young children from TVK village only from Mettu street in Villupuram district. All the eligible participants who meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria were provided with information about the procedure and the need for the study was explained in the language they understand the best and for their parents. Consent was taken after a brief explanation about the study to the participants and their parents. It was assured that all the information collected from the participants would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. The demographic details and responses were collected from their parents.

Experimental group

The young children with low level of Emotion Regulation were selected as the participants in the experimental group. First pre-test was conducted, where the participants provided with the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA) by Gross and John, (2003). Only the participants who scored to have low level of Emotion Regulation where chosen to participate further in this study. These participants are administered with CBT techniques. Then the post-test was conducted, the participants were once again asked to answer the questionnaire of Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA). Later both these pre-test and post-test scores were compared and the effectiveness of CBT technique was analysed.

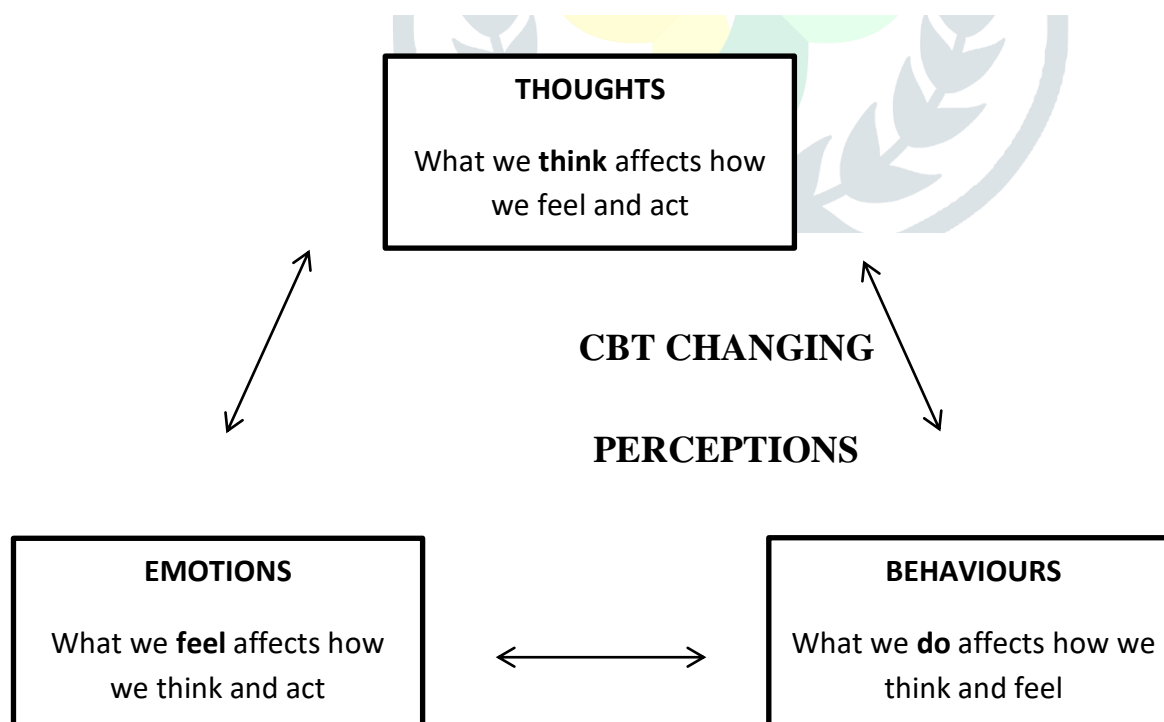
COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (CBT) TECHNIQUES

Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT) can help children to reframe how they identify, interpret and evaluate their emotional and behavioural reactions to negative experiences. Cognitive- Behaviour Therapy (CBT) techniques have demonstrated notable effectiveness in enhancing emotional regulation and self-regulation among young children. Research by (Weisz, 2017) found that CBT interventions significantly improved emotional regulation skills in children, helping them recognize, understand, and manage their emotions more effectively. Furthermore, CBT has been shown to enhance self-regulation by teaching children coping strategies, problem-solving skills, and techniques to challenge negative thought patterns (Salloum, 2015). By providing practical tools and fostering self-awareness, CBT equips children with the ability to regulate their emotions and behaviours adaptively. This supports their overall emotional well-being and social functioning, emphasizing the efficacy of CBT in promoting emotional and self-regulation skills among young children.

All ages can benefit from Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), an evidence-based talk therapy that also works well for children and adolescents. It emphasizes on the connections and reciprocal effects between our ideas, feelings, and behaviours. Through the identification, challenging, and modification of harmful or maladaptive thought patterns and behaviours, Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) improves self-esteem, emotional control, and coping mechanisms.

Figure.1 shows the basic model of CBT:

MODEL OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (CBT)



- **THOUGHTS** - Thoughts that are the words that run through one's mind. They are things that tell about what is going on around oneself. There are many different thoughts one could have about single situation
- **FEELINGS** - Feelings come and go as different things happen but one might feel happy, angry and sad, all in one day. Some feelings are uncomfortable, but they are not bad. Everyone has these feelings from time-to-time.
- **ACTIONS** - Actions are the things one do, or the way one's behave. One's thoughts and feelings have a big impact on how one act.

Children can benefit from CBT

All children, whether or not they have been diagnosed with special needs, can benefit from CBT. It works particularly well for treating youngsters with depression, anxiety, and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) in children can both benefit from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), according to recent studies. Evidence suggests that for the diseases and diagnoses listed above, a combination of CBT plus medication may be more beneficial than either treatment alone.

CBT enhance Emotion Regulation

Emotional learning begins in the toddler years, but research shows that it generally takes kids until they are 8 or 9 to have significant control of it. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has shown to be effective in enhancing emotion regulation skills among young children. Through CBT, children learn to identify and understand their emotions, allowing them to better manage and express them in healthy ways. Techniques such as cognitive restructuring help children challenge negative thought patterns, while behavioural strategies like relaxation exercises provide practical ways to cope with intense emotions. CBT also teaches problem-solving skills, empowering children to address emotional triggers effectively. Additionally, exposure and desensitization techniques help children confront fears and anxieties in a supportive environment, gradually reducing emotional reactivity. Overall, CBT equips young children with valuable tools and strategies to navigate their emotions, fostering emotional resilience and well-being.

Intervention the main investigation

The intervention for enhancing the level of Emotion Regulation among young children with low level of Emotion Regulation has been exclusively developed by the investigator by adopting Cognitive behavior techniques. The intervention has been based on the assumption that 'the way we think, how we respond' because the thoughts, feelings and actions are connected. Children can interpret the same life events very differently, leading to many varied emotional and behavioral consequences. Some of these consequences can be helpful and some are not so helpful in our day to day lives. Negative or unhelpful thoughts and beliefs are significant factor in the development of anxiety, anger, depression, low self-esteem, self-defeating behaviors

and difficulty with coping. Therefore, being able to identify and challenge these beliefs can assist one's to reduce distress and enhance their ability to cope in everyday life situations.

The intervention programme was designed to be imparted through twelve sessions spread over 6 weeks. Each session was 1 hour duration. The topics covered with in these sessions are as follows:

- **SESSION 1** - Orientation programme
- **SESSION 2** - Identifying Emotions
- **SESSION 3** - Emotion Regulation activities, naming emotions
- **SESSION 4** - Drawing and role play
- **SESSION 5** - Managing emotions
- **SESSION 6** - Emotion Charades Game play
- **SESSION 7** - Hopscotch Game play
- **SESSION 8** - Traffic light Game play
- **SESSION 9** - Self-talk restructuring
- **SESSION 10** - Meditation
- **SESSION 11** - Enhancing Emotion Regulation & Self-Regulation
- **SESSION 12** - Review & conclusions

Statistical analysis

The collected data was tabulated and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26.0. The results are inferred through statistical techniques like Descriptive and Inferential Statistical methods like Mean, Standard deviation, t-test, and paired t-test was used to find out the significance difference between the mean pre-test and mean post-test scores.

RESULTS

Table-1 Comparison between pre and post-test in the respondent's level of Expressive Suppression in the dimension of Emotion Regulation.

Pre-test of Emotion Regulation	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	p-value	LS
	10	13.20	2.394	6.880	.001	S
Post-test of Emotion Regulation	10	8.70	1.767			

(Source: Primary data) S = Significance at 0.001 level

Ho: There will be no significant difference in the respondents level of Emotion Regulation in pre-test and post-test after intervention of CBT techniques.

The above table-1 shows Mean, SD and t-value of the pre-test and post-test in the respondents level of Expressive Suppression in the dimension of Emotion Regulation. Based on that, it is inferred from the obtained results, the pre-test of Emotion Regulation obtained a mean value of (13.20) and post-test obtained a mean value of (8.70). The calculated t-value is (6.880), which is significant and there is a significant difference between pre and post-test. The P-value is 0.001 also proved that there is highly significant difference between the pre and post-test of Emotion Regulation in the dimension of Expressive Suppression. Hence after intervention, participants have low level of Expressive Suppression. There is null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. So it is concluded that after CBT techniques respondents have enhanced Emotion Regulation.

Table-2 Comparison between pre and post-test in the respondent's level of Cognitive Reappraisal in the dimension of Emotion Regulation.

Pre-test of Emotion Regulation	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	p-value	LS
	10	9.60	1.713	6.623	.001	S
Post-test of Emotion Regulation	10	16.30	2.791			

(Source: Primary data) S = Significance at 0.001 level

Ho: There will be no significant difference in the respondents level of Emotion Regulation in pre-test and post-test after intervention of CBT techniques.

The above table-2 shows Mean, SD and t-value of the pre-test and post-test in the respondents level of Cognitive Reappraisal in the dimension of Emotion Regulation. Based on that, it is inferred from the obtained results, the pre-test of Emotion Regulation obtained a mean value of (9.60) and post-test obtained a mean value of (16.30). The calculated t-value is (6.623), which is significant and there is a significant difference between pre and post-test. The P-value is 0.001 also proved that there is highly significant difference between the pre and post-test of Emotion Regulation in the dimension of Cognitive Reappraisal. Hence after intervention, participants have high level of Cognitive Reappraisal. There is null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. So it is concluded that after CBT techniques respondents have enhanced Emotion Regulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study referred that the effectiveness of CBT techniques among low level of Emotion Regulation among young children. From the present study, it is implied that the CBT techniques is effective and can be used as a technique on strengthening Emotion Regulation among young children. It is hoped that the present study would open new avenues for further research in the area selected for the present investigation. Some of the lines on which further studies can be undertaken are listed below:

- Increase in sample size can be done in future studies.
- The area of the study can be expanded for other age groups.
- The other psychological interventions and other psychological variables can be implemented with CBT techniques.
- The population of the study will be other than normal young children.

IMPLICATIONS

The study on the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques in bolstering emotion regulation and self-regulation among young children carries significant implications across various domains. Firstly, it underscores the pivotal role of early intervention in nurturing healthy emotional development. By targeting these fundamental skills during childhood, there's a potential to mitigate the onset of more severe emotional and behavioral challenges later in life. Moreover, in educational settings, integrating CBT techniques into curricula or counseling programs may enhance students' abilities to manage their emotions and behaviors, consequently fostering improved academic performance and socio-emotional well-being.

LIMITATIONS

The study has some limitations. They are,

- The samples were self-selected by the researcher.
- Time constraints for the administration of intervention.
- Lack of previous research studies on this topic.

CONCLUSION

Emotion Regulation a central component of mental health and its imbalance might underline several mental disorders (Berenbaum, 2003). According to the researcher enhancing Emotional Regulation is crucial for young children to enhance good mental health of regulating emotions and to learn about the world around them to acquire the fundamental Self-Regulation skills. The study aims to summarize the effectiveness of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy techniques to enhance Emotion Regulation. The research design used for the proposed study is quasi experimental design. An experimental group will be used to assess the effectiveness of the intervention programme. This study adopts purposive sampling technique. The sample collected for this study was 15 samples and only participants with low level of Emotional. The sample for the present

study was 10 participants. The young children with low level of Emotion Regulation were selected as the participants in the experimental group. First pre-test was conducted, where the participants provided with the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA) by Gross and John, (2003). Only the participants who scored to have low level of Emotion Regulation were chosen to participate further in this study. These participants are administered with CBT techniques. Then the post-test was conducted, the participants were once again asked to answer the questionnaire of Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA). Later both these pre-test and post-test scores were compared and the effectiveness of CBT technique was analysed. The study recommends Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) techniques enhancing Emotion Regulation among young children.

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