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## The effect of group rational emotive behavior restructuring on mental health of parents of exceptional children

Azar Matin <sup>a\*</sup>, Majid Yoosefi Looyeh <sup>b</sup>, G. Ali Afrooz <sup>c</sup>, Mahmood Dezhkam <sup>d</sup><sup>a</sup> *Ph.D. student, Department of Psychology, Tehran Centre Branch, Islamic Azad University (IAU), Iran*<sup>b</sup> *Assistant Professor, Islamic Azad University (IAU), Iran; University Malaya (UMFRDC), Malaysia*<sup>c</sup> *Distinguished Professor and Dean of Faculty of Psychology and Education, Tehran University President, Psychology and Counseling Organization of I.R. Iran*<sup>d</sup> *Associate professor, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences*

### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study the effectiveness of group Rational Emotional Behavioral restructuring on mental health of parents of exceptional children. Pre-Test Post-Test experimental design with control group was used. 60 parents were chosen randomly and divided into experimental and control groups. Munsh Mental Health Self-Evaluation Scale was used. The experimental group received 10 sessions of 90 minutes of group Rational Emotional Behavioral restructuring once weekly. The intervention contained teaching REBT basics, rational and irrational beliefs and also their impact on emotions and behavior, group discussions for exploring their beliefs, feelings and behaviors in everyday life in particular toward their exceptional children. The results indicated the group Rational Emotional Behavioral restructuring had a significant effect on increasing the level of mental health parents of exceptional children.

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Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).*Keywords:* Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Mental health, Parent, Exceptional children;

### 1. Introduction

Birth of an exceptional child can be very uncomfortable event for a family and make the future of family unpredictable (Stern, 1999) and endanger their mental health (Webster-Stratton & Herbert, 1994). These problems will enter the continuous uncomfortable and stress on family, especially on their mothers, and this requires serious attention of experts relevant authorities. In addition to mothers, this pressure has effects on fathers and sibling, in other words effect on mental health of whole society (Jacques J, Zimmermann, Eisemann, & Fleck, 2008).

The root of problems is in their thought and believes in related with children. In today culture, there are complex of irrational inherent thought and believes. So cause incompatible behaviors. The complex is the thought that people think about the events, particularly traumatic events (Ellis, 1996c) . Due to people analyze dairy events base on the irrational justifications and philosophies, they show emotion in wrong manner and act as behavior self-defeating (Thompson, Rudolph, & Henderson, 2003). In general, we created our own feelings as we do this through learning

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\* Azar Matin. Tel.: +98-912-393-7831

E-mail address: [azarmatin@yahoo.com](mailto:azarmatin@yahoo.com)

(from parents and others) and the invention of rational and stupid thought (in mind). We choose our helpful or destructive thoughts as consciously or non-consciously. We can make a specified change in ours. We can change our deepest thoughts, feelings and actions with use of REBT (Ellis, 2005). Moller and Botha (1996) research findings - 44 men with personality type A to the REBT group therapy - also was found that treatment significantly reduced the severity of personality type A behaviors. Also Osinowo, Olley, & Adejumo (2003) showed that REBT in the treatment of anxiety and depression before and after surgery is effective in patients, and the studies of Emmelkamp And Beens (1991) found REBT and exposure therapy, is effective in treating OCD and Meta analysis of 28 controlled studies show REBT therapy, like other therapies, including combination therapy and systematic desensitization can be effective (Engels, Garnefski, & Diekstra, 1993). Indeed, REBT finds expectations and beliefs that lead to emotional disturbance (Ellis & Becker, 1986). Then, in terms of practical or realistic, the destructive beliefs and expectations were questioned (Ellis A. , 2001). Anyone with the goals desires and their intentions and judgments about them find self-conscious. However, the self-conscious is more and think more about goals and desire; create more self-determination and self-management (Ellis, 2005).

The present study is considered REBT as an effective method for to identify irrational thoughts and beliefs of Mothers (of children with special needs), and changing of opinion, to achieve compatibility in general and emotional and psychological health.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

Participants were formed from 60 mothers of children with special needs subjects (two groups of 30 people). The mothers ranged in education from diploma to bachelor.

### *2.2. Measure*

To measure the mental health of mothers, Munsh Mental Health Self-Evaluation Scale was used. This measure has been made by (Stones & Kozma, 1996) and emphasizes on the amount and intensity of positive and negative feelings. Validity and internal consistency of this test, has been reported up from 85%. Validity of this scale by using the method of retest after 18 months has been achieved equal to 70%.

### *2.3. Procedure*

Research design is pretest – posttest with a control group. Therefore, for evaluating their mental health, Munsh Mental Health Self-Evaluation Scale was used before and after training. The studied groups based on pre-test scores in the mental health were matched. Then, they were divided into two groups of 30 people (in an experimental group and a control group); Experimental group were taught REBT once a week for ten 90-minute sessions across a 10-weeks period, and Control group that were not taught. Issues treated include the feelings thermometers lesson, the facts versus opinions lesson, learning the ACBs lesson, the group discussion format, respectively (See Banks & Zions, 2009). The following activities were applied to the treatment plan: Session 1: Building relationship and Perception of feelings; the purpose of this Session to build relationships with parents and to inform and motivate them to participate in activities and discussions. Also to help them understand the feeling's to thinking, and identify measure. These activities help mothers to learn how to label feelings and associate a number to their feelings in an effort to better relate the intensity of feelings. Session 2: facts versus opinions; the objective of the lessons and activities is to help the mothers define and determine the different between fact and opinion. Session 3 & 4: learning the ACBs; the objective of these lessons is designed for learning mothers to Identify Activating event, Consequence, Belief system. Session 5 & 6: the purpose of this session to recognize thoughts and irrational beliefs underlying them, has caused distressed. Session 7, 8, 9 &10: the purpose of this session to practice active and powerful

discussing with irrational beliefs, and also replace the rational thoughts and beliefs rather than irrational thoughts and beliefs.

### 3. Results

Outcomes on the performance of participants, on scale of mental health in the pretest and posttest are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Average and deviation of mental health scores

| Groups        | Pre-Test |      |       | Post-Test |      |       |
|---------------|----------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|
|               | n        | M    | SD    | n         | M    | SD    |
| REBT Group    | 62       | 3.45 | 11.15 | 62        | 8.85 | 9.19  |
| Control Group | 32       | 5.00 | 12.68 | 32        | 5.09 | 12.86 |

For outcomes analyzing, analysis of variance with repeated measurements is used. According to results of variance analysis the average of the participants' mental health in post-test (6.974) is more than pre-test (4.226) ( $F=5.221$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). To cross compare of averages, independent samples test for differential scores (difference between pretest and posttest scores: 5.40 for experimental group and 0.09 for control group) was used. The results showed considering comparing of pretest and posttest, what caused the differential scores in the experimental groups is REBT, and in the control group only, intervening variables causes a difference in the two runs (3.099,  $P<0.01$ ). Therefore it can be concluded that the significant difference was observed, is resulted from the REBT.

### 4. Discussion

Each person in the direction evolution has an inherent tendency to Integration, and to achieve a higher level of adaptation and compromising. This trend calls for person to be always dynamic and active with regarding changes of internal and external conditions, and be able to achieve higher harmony. To achieve dynamic balance, the internal relations (relationship between cognition, emotion and behavior) and external relations (Our relationship with others, nature and the physical environment and exchange information with them) are possible (Yoosefi Looyeh, 2004). The purpose of this study, as well as access to more information about the effect of (REBT) in group setting on the irrational beliefs of parents of children with special needs, to achieve a higher level of adaptation and adjustment, and to increase mental health. The results of this study suggest that the REBT is effective in increasing the mental health of mothers of these children. The results of this study is consistent with other research on the effectiveness of REBT; Including Osinowo, Olley, & Adejumo (2003) in the treatment of anxiety and depression, Adelman, McGee, Power, & Hanson, (2005) to reduce anger in juveniles, Moller & Botha (1996) in reducing the intension of behaviors in personality type A, and Emmelkamp & Beens, (1991) in the treatment of OCD. Findings highlight the need for further discussion the way of using REBT program in teaching parent in this research.

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