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A GROUP COUNSELING BASED ON REALITY THERAPY FOR PARENTS WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

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In this study, a group counseling program (GCP) was carried out on the basis of Reality Therapy in order to help parents with disabled children to fulfill their psychological needs, and the effects of the program on parents' psychological needs, hopelessness, social support perceptions, and trait and state anxiety levels were examined. Method Participants The study was conducted with 30 voluntary parents with disabled children. Procedure The study was carried out in several steps. (1) semi-structured interviews based on the Reality therapy were conducted with parents. (2) the content analyses of the interviews were made in the light of theoretical determinations and expert opinions. (3) 10-point Likert-type checklist with 12 items (Psychological Support Need Determination Form-PSNDF) and GCP were composed. (4) 20 parents were randomly appointed to two group. Before the experiment, in light of some measurements (demographic information form, PSNDF, Beck Hopelessness Scale, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, Multidimensional Social Support Scale) administered to two group as pretests. (5) GCP was administered to the experimental group. The control group was kept waiting. After the experiment, posttest measurements were administered to the groups. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test and Mann–Whitney U test were employed. Also a questionnaire (Social validity questionnaire-SVQ) was administered to the experimental group. Results Results indicated that the hopelessness levels of the experimental group participants were lower and multidimensional social support levels were higher than pre-test measurement. The results of SVQ and PSNDF showed that the experimental group was quite satisfied with the program. On the other hand intergroup comparisons showed that state anxiety levels became significantly lower in the experimental group in comparison to the control group at the end of the experiment. Discussion The present study has showed that group counseling based on reality therapy helps parents with disabled children fulfill their psychological needs. Considering that a substantial amount of the difficulties experienced by parents having disabled children cannot be changed by very nature of disabilities, it seems to be more functional that parents accept the existing situation and make choices accordingly. Indeed, the theory has showed special emphasis on the importance of accepting the reality and taking actions directly in coping with difficulties (Glasser, 2000; Glasser, 2004; Wubbolding, 2010; Sharf, 2012). On the other hand, although the views of the parents and PSNDF results have indicated that group counseling is quite influential, quantitative data do not support these findings significantly. This may be because; the group counseling was built upon theoretical bases and the parents' views. The fact that the expected difference did not come up in quantitative data may have arisen from the weakness of the employed measurement tools in representing the problem areas of this group. That reveals the need for developing measurement tools to determine the problems and needs of this target group.

Keywords: reality therapy; parents with disabled children; group counseling.