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## A survey on Effectiveness of Mothers' Group Counseling by Means of Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in Reducing Test Anxiety in Their Children

Malihe Khosravi<sup>1</sup>, Roghayeh Yazarloo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Islamic Azad University Branch of Galikesh

<sup>2</sup>Master of Women's Studies, Islamic Azad University, Science & Research Branch, Tehran

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the Effectiveness of mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in Reducing test anxiety in their children (girls) at Second Grade Secondary School of district 9 of Tehran city. The statistical population entails the entire girl students at Second Grade Secondary School of district 9 of Tehran city(2012-2013) where the sample group was chosen among these students with the sample size equal to 40 students chosen by means of Multi-stage random sampling method put into The two experimental and control groups. The tools used in this paper include Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). Randomized control-group pretest-posttest design has been applied in this paper. At first the individuals were selected as the sample group who had the score in the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) with the deviation standard less than mean and then were replaced with two experimental and control groups. The experimental intervention (group counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT)) on the experimental group at 12 sessions in a half hour (one session per week) were applied, and then after this finished post-test can be applied for both groups. To analyze data, in addition to descriptive statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation, the inferential statistic methods like t-test were used. The results from the data analysis showed that mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in Reducing test anxiety in girl children has helped more in experimental group rather than the control group. The significance level has been taken  $\alpha > 0.05$ .

**Keywords:** Group Counseling, Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Test Anxiety.

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## Introduction

The World Health Organization has defined anxiety as a series of protests and psychological distress that cannot be attributed to specific case where its symptoms can be sustained as attacks or steady-state (Sadeghi, 2001). Anxiety clearly as important aspects of human behavior in ancient Egypt and Greece was identified. Rollomay followed the historical roots of anxiety prevailing concepts in philosophical and religious views, e.g. Pascal in seventeenth century and Kirkegard in nineteenth century.

Comprehensive definition which can include anxiety as an emotion with certain characteristics, such as feeling tense, repetitive thoughts or concerns, avoiding certain situations, in order to avoid worry and anxiety and somatic symptoms such as sweating, trembling dizziness or fast heart rate is determined (Kazdin, 2000). Test anxiety is one of the situational anxieties that occurs in all socio-economic classes (Rost and Schermer, 2001). Carter and his colleagues (2008) believed that 31-41% of the American students can experience the test anxiety (Zidner, 2007). The studies conducted grounded on this topic have reported the prevalence of test anxiety 10-30% which this is reported 17.2% in Iran (Sepehrian and Rezaei, 2010). Some scholars Fine Gold, 1994; Bahrami, 1997; Mehrabi, M., et al, 1989; ABOLGHASEMI, 2003; Khosravi, 2008, Bishop, 1998; Maria, 1990) believed that the prevalence of test anxiety is more among girls rather than boys (Carter et al, 2008). During the development, children and adolescents can experience various types and a range of anxiety. Sometimes such anxieties are so severe where the daily life and education found with difficulty. One of these anxieties is the very Test Anxiety, this as a prevailing education phenomenon is intertwined with children' education achievement and performance (Abolghasemi, 2002). Ganzals Spielberger *et al*, (1998) referred to the articles on the nature of test anxiety associated to 50 years ago, but, overview of test anxiety seriously started with the research by Saracen and Mndr (1952), to date they are remembered as the well-known

researchers who have provided studies beyond the topics of anxiety and learning (Biabangard, 2010). In different studies, the prevalence of test anxiety among learners have been reported about 10-30% (Mc Brinoloze, 1987). Boidle, Turner & Huges (1993) have been reported the prevalence of test anxiety among primary school students about 41%. Abolghasemi *et al*, (2002) has been reported the prevalence of test anxiety about 17.3%. The preliminary studies on the basis of test anxiety have been started since 1914. Yet, serious research on the issue of test anxiety has been started since 1952 by Saracen and Mndr. To date, test anxiety has been studied in different points of views by many scholars. An early looks at anxiety finds it as an intense physiological arousal which creates interference by functioning via the tests. In this way, test anxiety is taken as a part of response system which prepares the person to predict danger and avoid from punishment or escape from the war situation (Mardpoor *et al*, 2012). Another looking at the test anxiety as a feature dependent on the situation specifies where it manifests in the situations while people are evaluated (Zeinder, 1998). In the third looking, anxiety has been mentioned as a cognitive component added to test anxiety, regarded as the main factor in having low performance in tests (Orbach, 2007). Verne and Benson, based on previous studies showed a pattern of three factors for test anxiety, indicating cognitive, behavioral and physiological factors (Meiger, 2001). More recently, the recent view on test anxiety has focused on the Working memory (Weems CF, 2009). Non-adaptive responses of students in case of test anxiety with working memory resources accounted essential for the successful performance in doing the tasks enter into competition. This anxiety causes the anxiety increases among the students during the test. This means that the individuals who are subjected to the test anxiety draw their attention to the disorganized thoughts, so the attention assigned to doing the tasks would be less (Benson, 2004). Most researchers have

taken two important components for test anxiety: 1- Anxiety component: this component includes the cognitive activities which are not associated to the tasks consisting of High anxiety about performance, Consequences of test failure, Thoughts about his contempt, Assess their abilities in comparison to others and negative expectations of the performance. 2- Affectivity component: this component refers to the self-cognitive emotional arousal and physiological reactions like Palpitations, stomach upset, headache, sweating and *etc.* (Spielberger, 1995).

### Research Importance

Every year, many students in schools and universities, although with good abilities to continue their education, decline in their education and oblige to leave their education in some cases. A variety of factors interfere here where test anxiety is one of them.

Test anxiety is an issue drawn into attention in recent years, large body of research in recent years has focused on the importance of such topic. This phenomenon frequently leads to negative cognitive evaluation, improper physiological reactions and decline in education functioning playing a destructive role in students' mental health and education (Saracen, 1975). The importance of research topic can be good stimuli for conducting the research. according to the fact that very little research grounded on mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in Reducing test anxiety in their children conducted across world to date, and also due to the fact that a regular research to date has not conducted, so conducting such a research is essential whereby can cause the science of psychology get increased and enhanced. Due to high prevalence of test anxiety among the students being in need of fundamental measured in preventing, recognizing and treating, it seems that the people found with test anxiety probably are not provided with proper Group Counseling, so, going through this topic can inform the authorities about the relationship

between mother's Group Counseling and reducing test anxiety so far as training and group counseling provided for mothers can be useful to reduce test anxiety preventing from decline at education.

### Research Objectives

This paper aims to determine Effectiveness of mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in Reducing test anxiety in their children.

Secondary objectives

Secondary objectives include:

- 1- Helping students to reduce their anxiety while having test and take control of it.
- 2- Providing a situation in a group at which the individuals help them in resolving problem and increasing the learning.
- 3- Showing the Strengths and weaknesses of this method to the consultants in order to let them use it in future in a better way.

### Tools for Measurement

Measure of test anxiety on Spielberger's Test Anxiety Scale was used. Spielberger's Test Anxiety Inventory by Spielberger (1980) has been made. Anxiety inventory contains 20 articles that describes reaction before, during and after the test, including two subscales "Affectivity" and "anxiety". The respondent based upon a four-option scale including never, sometimes, more often, always responds to each article. The high score in the questionnaire indicates the test anxiety clearly where on the minimum and maximum score of the individuals equals to 20 and 80, respectively. Spielberger has created and validated this questionnaire in a research on a group of students (Abolghasemi, 2004). In a research by Abolghasemi (2002), internal consistency reliability coefficients, alpha and test-retest reliability (after one month) of this

questionnaire has been reported with satisfactory. Spielberger's Test Anxiety Inventory is associated with Sarason and Stoops's Test Anxiety Scale among males (0.82) and females (0.83). The correlation on subscale of anxiety in this questionnaire with anxiety subscales by Morris and Liberty (1967) in males and females has been reported 0.73 and 0.69, respectively. Affectivity subscale of this questionnaire with Affectivity subscale by Morris and Liberty has been obtained 0.77 and 0.85, respectively (Farahu *et al.*, 2012).

### Research Methodology

The research method is empirical where randomized control-group pretest-posttest design has been applied in this paper. The statistical population entails the entire girl students at Second Grade Secondary School of district 9 of Tehran city (2012-2013) where the sample group was chosen among these students with the sample size equal to 40 students chosen by means of Multi-stage random sampling method put into the two experimental and control groups with 20 individuals in each group. The tools used in this paper include Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). Randomized control-group pretest-posttest

design has been applied in this paper. At first the individuals were selected as the sample group who had the score in the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) with the deviation standard less than mean and then were replaced with two experimental and control groups. The experimental intervention (group counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT)) on the experimental group at 12 sessions in a half hour (one session per week) were applied, and then after this finished post-test can be applied for both groups. To analyze data, in addition to descriptive statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation, the inferential statistic methods like t-test were used.

### Research Hypothesis

Mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) affects Reducing test anxiety in their children.

### Research Findings

The descriptive analysis of the data Table one indicates Descriptive characteristics of participants scores on the Test Anxiety

**Table 1.** Descriptive characteristics of participants' scores on the Test Anxiety

Descriptive characteristics of participants scores on the Test Anxiety			
Statistical indicators / groups	No	Mean	Standard deviation
Experimental group	20	20/13	3/476
Control group	20	20/66	3/457

**Table 2.** Descriptive characteristics of participants post test scores on the Test Anxiety

Descriptive characteristics of participants post test scores on the test anxiety			
Statistical indicators / groups	No	Mean	Standard deviation
Experimental group	20	15.5	3/129
Control group	20	19.4	3/178

Table 1 indicates the mean and standard deviation of the pretest scores of test anxiety

for the two groups, experimental and control where the pretest mean for experimental and

control group is reported equal to 20.13 and 20.66, both reported high and the same in both groups, where there is only a negligible difference (53%); deviation standard of pretest for experimental group (3.476) indicates less scattered (81%) rather than the standard deviation for control group (3.457).

Table 2 indicates the mean and standard deviation of the post-test scores of test anxiety for the two groups, experimental and control where the score of Mean difference related to the experimental group (4.63) is so greater than the one for control group (1.26). this means totally about 4.63 score from the mean of pretest test anxiety for the

experimental group was reduced after mothers' group counseling, but such a decrease was very low in control group which it was less than 1.26, indicating lack of decrease in test anxiety.

### Inferential Analysis of Data

According to the research hypothesis for the comparison of the means from Subtracting pre-test scores from the post-test scores of Test Anxiety among participants in both experimental and control groups, t-test has been used where the results have been shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The results of t-test to compare the difference of means for test anxiety for both experimental and control group

The results of t-test to compare the difference of means for test anxiety for both experimental and control groups						
Statistical indicators / groups	No	Mean	Variance of mean difference	Degrees of freedom	T calculated	Significance level
Experimental	20	4/63	2.42	38	14.25	0.009
Control	20	1/26				

Because this is a test with a range, the value of t determined for rejection of zero hypothesis at 0.01 level and degree of freedom ( $df=20+20-2=38$ ) equals to 3.58, and because the value of t determined 14.25 is greater than the value of t shown in table 3, so the zero hypothesis is rejected and research hypothesis is confirmed. So, one can say that mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in Reducing test anxiety in their children came effective.

### Conclusion

Anxiety is one of the Human emotional feelings; yet this feeling while gets severe it might result in unfavorable consequences. One of the events most threatening and causes anxiety occur while having exam is the test anxiety. This paper addressed the

Effectiveness of mothers' Group Counseling by means of Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in Reducing test anxiety in their children (girls). The results from findings show that experimental group rather than control group found less anxiety to the test where mothers' Group Counseling came beneficial to reduce anxiety. The findings of present paper in this area are in accordance with the results of the research by Spielberger (1980), Putin and Gray (1983), Sap (1994), Williams (1995), Kennedy (1999), argon (2003), Etemadi Toodsheki(1995), Shaghaghi(2003), and also it is totally relevant with Ellis's rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) confirming its research's findings.

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