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“Exploring the Effect of Cognitive Restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation Among Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder”

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Abstract:

Cognitive restructuring strategies are techniques used in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). To help individuals identify and challenge negative or distorted thought patterns. These strategies aim to alter the way a person thinks about situations, themselves, and the world around them, ultimately leading to more balanced and adaptive thinking pattern. Also referred to as a cognitive reframing which is a behaviour technique associated with cognitive therapy . Being able to recognize when thoughts are irrational and learn to replace them with the rational thoughts. Allow people to face their daily lives with confidence because they have learned to control their thinking and change their irrational thoughts into rational thoughts. Cognitive restructuring, a core component of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), can be adapted to work with individuals on the autism spectrum. People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often have unique cognitive and sensory processing styles, so it is important to tailor the approach to meet their specific needs and preferences. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience. It involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's emotions in various situations. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges in social interaction, restricted or repetitive behaviors and communication. In these years, there has been a major rise in

awareness of ASD, because of an increase in research efforts aimed at better understanding its underlying mechanisms, identification effective interventions, and improving support systems for individuals with ASD and their families. In which Cognitive Restructuring Strategies under Cognitive Behavioral Strategies been practicing effectively for children with ASD. Emotional regulation can be particularly challenging for children with (ASD) due to sensory sensitivities, difficulties in communication, social interactions, and understanding emotions.

Keywords: *Cognitive Restructuring; Emotional Regulation; Strategies; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Special Education.*

Introduction:

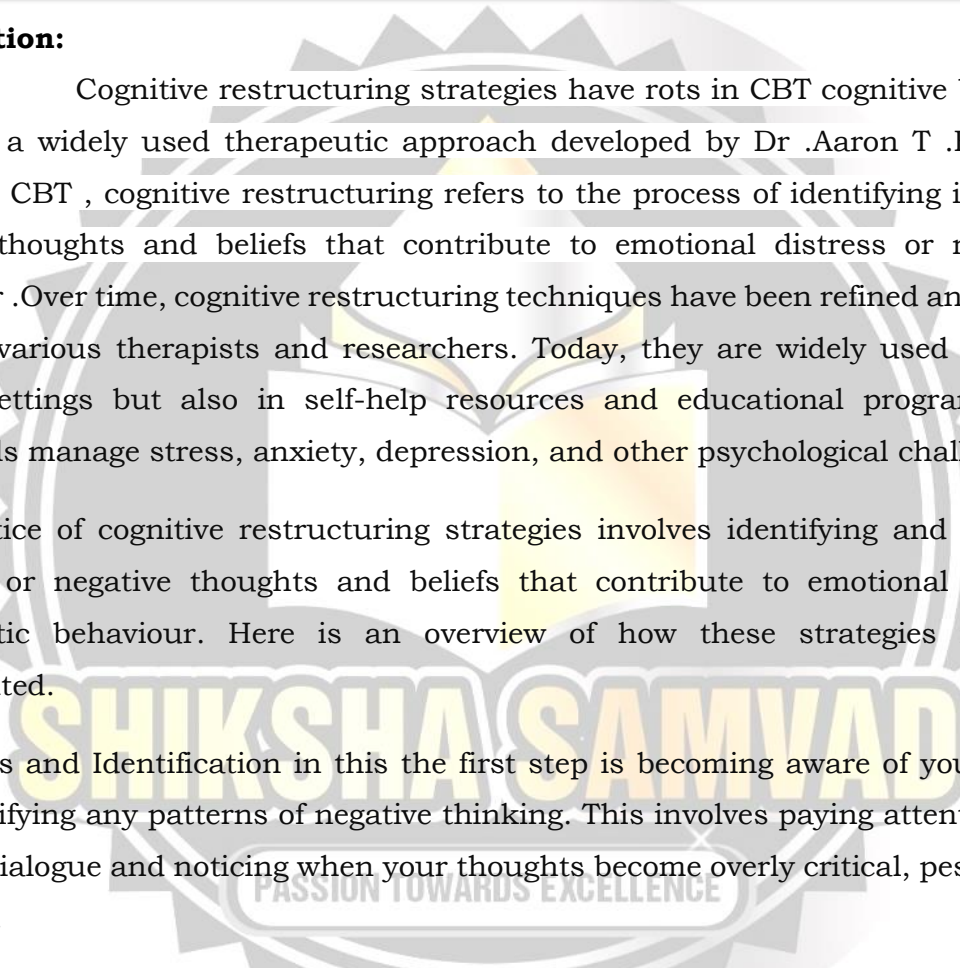
Cognitive restructuring strategies have roots in CBT cognitive behavioural therapy, a widely used therapeutic approach developed by Dr. Aaron T. Beck in the 1960s. In CBT, cognitive restructuring refers to the process of identifying irrational or negative thoughts and beliefs that contribute to emotional distress or maladaptive behaviour. Over time, cognitive restructuring techniques have been refined and expanded upon by various therapists and researchers. Today, they are widely used not only in clinical settings but also in self-help resources and educational programs to help individuals manage stress, anxiety, depression, and other psychological challenges.

The practice of cognitive restructuring strategies involves identifying and challenging distorted or negative thoughts and beliefs that contribute to emotional distress or problematic behaviour. Here is an overview of how these strategies are typically implemented.

Awareness and Identification in this the first step is becoming aware of your thoughts and identifying any patterns of negative thinking. This involves paying attention to your internal dialogue and noticing when your thoughts become overly critical, pessimistic, or irrational.

The Thought Records One common technique used in cognitive restructuring is the use of thought records or thought logs. In a thought record, you write down the situation that triggered a negative thought, the automatic thought that occurred in response, the emotions you experienced, and any associated behaviours. This process helps you gain insight into the connection between your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

Cognitive restructuring strategies are techniques used to facilitate this process, such as identifying negative thoughts, examining evidence supporting those thoughts, generating alternative explanations, and practicing new ways of thinking. These strategies aim to



help individuals overcome cognitive biases and develop healthier thought patterns, leading to improved emotional well-being and behaviour.

The effect of cognitive restructuring strategies on emotional regulation among children with ASD. Here cognitive restructuring is a strategy we use in Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Cognition refers to how one think and process information through there sense. Whereas, restructuring term means to re construct or re structure or re Mold something. Together cognitive restructuring means to a group of therapeutic techniques that help people notice and change negative thinking patterns and negative emotions. When thought patterns become destructive and self-defeating, Cognitive restructuring help you explore ways to interrupt and redirect them. It basically helps an individual to process positive emotions and reduces negative emotions and cognition.

As cognitive restructuring is a strategy of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which is a widely used as a therapeutic and evidence-based approach to psychotherapy that focuses on the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It is based on, how we think about a situation affects how we feel and how we behave in response.

Cognitive Restructuring Strategies

Cognitive restructuring is a therapeutic technique often used in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to help individuals identify and challenge negative or irrational thoughts and beliefs. It involves examining the way one thinks about situations and events and then restructuring those thoughts to be more rational, balanced, and constructive.

The process typically involves several steps:

- **Identification of Negative Thoughts:** The individual learns to recognize their negative or distorted thoughts, often referred to as cognitive distortions. These distortions can include all-or-nothing thinking, overgeneralization, catastrophizing, and other patterns that contribute to negative emotions.
- **Evaluation of Evidence:** The individual is encouraged to examine the evidence supporting or refuting their negative thoughts. They may be asked questions like, "What evidence do I have to support this thought?" or "Is there a more balanced way to view this situation?"
- **Challenge Negative Thoughts:** Once the evidence is evaluated, the individual learns to challenge their negative thoughts by considering alternative interpretations or perspectives. This step helps them recognize that their initial interpretation may not be the only or most accurate way to view a situation.

- Replacement with Rational Thoughts: After challenging negative thoughts, the individual replaces them with more rational and balanced thoughts. This process involves developing positive affirmations or coping statements that reflect a more realistic and adaptive perspective.
- Practice and Reinforcement: The individual practices applying these cognitive restructuring techniques in various situations to reinforce the new ways of thinking. Over time, this practice helps to strengthen cognitive flexibility and resilience.

Cognitive restructuring can be effective for managing a range of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and stress. It empowers individuals to take control of their thoughts and emotions, leading to improved overall well-being.

CRS can stand for various things depending on the context, but in the context of therapy or psychology, it likely refers to Cognitive Restructuring Strategies. Cognitive restructuring is a core component of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), and it involves identifying and challenging negative or distorted thought patterns to promote more realistic and balanced thinking.

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These strategies aim to help individuals overcome cognitive biases and develop healthier thought patterns, leading to improved emotional well-being and behaviour.

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In CBT, therapists work collaboratively with clients to identify and challenge negative thought patterns and beliefs that contribute to emotional distress and dysfunctional behaviour.

CBT is a goal-oriented and practical form of therapy that helps individuals identify and change negative patterns of thinking and behaviour. CBT is effective in treating a wide range of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and eating disorders, among others.

CBT with ASD Autism Spectrum Disorder

This therapy is generally used with children with ASD and found out very effective as it specifically works for the behavioural challenges of the learner. Children with ASD refers to, autism spectrum disorder.

It is a developmental disorder that affects communication, behaviour, and social interaction. It is called a "spectrum" disorder because it affects individuals differently, and to varying degrees. Some individuals with ASD may have difficulty with social interactions and communication, while others may have repetitive behaviours and intense interests in specific topics.

Many individuals with ASD engage in repetitive behaviours or have intense interests in specific topics. These behaviours can include repeating the same actions or phrases, obsessively focusing on a particular subject, or adhering to strict routines.

People with ASD may have heightened or reduced sensitivities to sensory stimuli, such as light, sound, touch, or smell. Certain sensations that are normal for others can be overwhelming or painful for individuals with ASD.

The exact cause of ASD is not known, but it is believed to involve a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Researchers continue to study these factors to better understand the origins of the disorder.

Benefits of CBT with ASD:

- **Improved Coping Skills:** CBT equips children with effective coping skills to manage stress, anxiety, obsessive-compulsion disorder and frustration. Children with special needs often face unique challenges, and CBT can help them develop adaptive strategies to cope with these challenges and improve their overall wellbeing.
- **Social skills Development:** CBT can be used to teach social skills and improve social understanding in individuals with ASD. This may involve role-playing, social stories, and other structured exercises to practice communication, perspective-taking, and social interaction skills.

Emotion Regulation: Many children with special needs struggle with regulating their emotions. CBT teaches them to identify and understand their emotions, mindfulness practice, and relaxation exercises, leading to better emotional regulation. This can be especially important for children with conditions like autism spectrum disorders or ADHD.

CBT in relevance ASD

Emotion Recognition and Regulation:

- **Relevance:** Difficulty in recognizing and regulating emotions is common in ASD. CBT can enhance emotional awareness and teach coping strategies for managing intense emotions.
- **Approach:** CBT techniques help individuals identify and label emotions, understand their triggers, and develop strategies like deep breathing or counting to manage emotional arousal.

Cognitive restructuring with autism spectrum disorder.

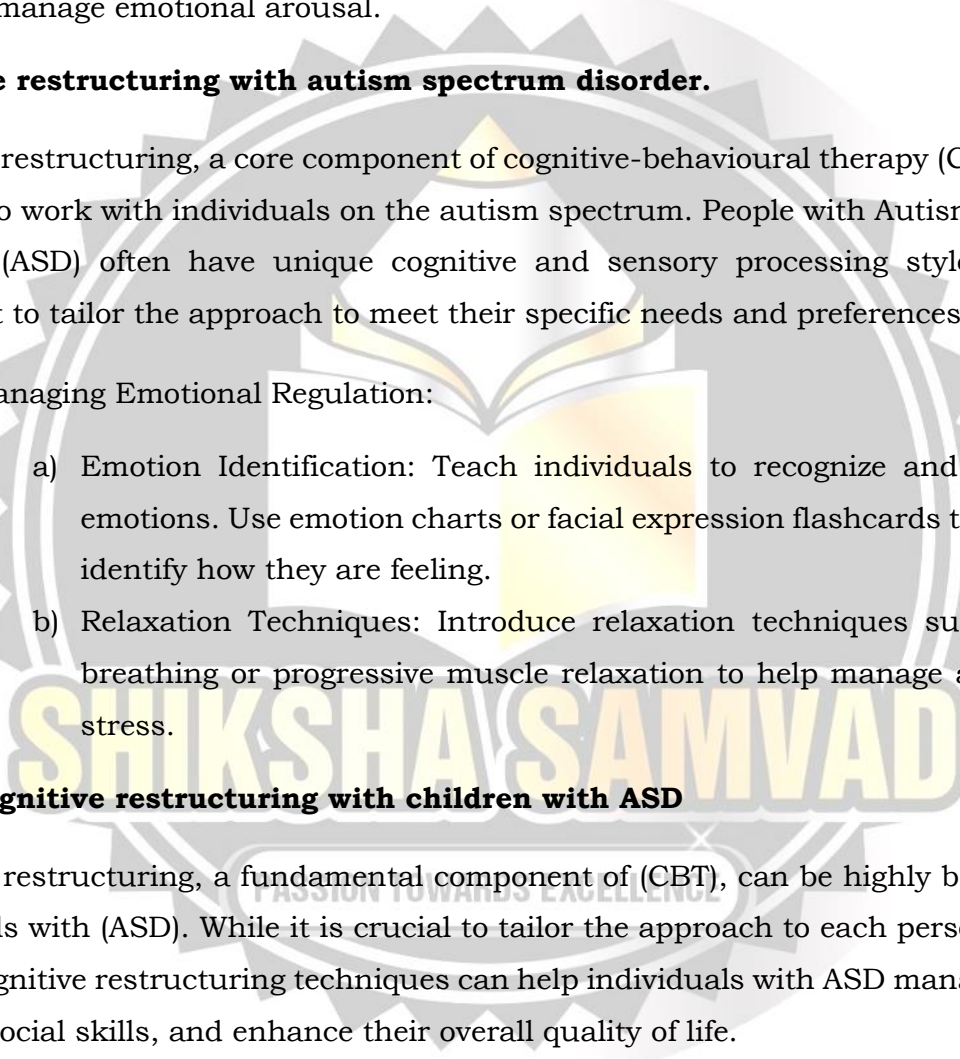
Cognitive restructuring, a core component of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), can be adapted to work with individuals on the autism spectrum. People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often have unique cognitive and sensory processing styles, so it is important to tailor the approach to meet their specific needs and preferences.

- **Managing Emotional Regulation:**
 - a) **Emotion Identification:** Teach individuals to recognize and label their emotions. Use emotion charts or facial expression flashcards to help them identify how they are feeling.
 - b) **Relaxation Techniques:** Introduce relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation to help manage anxiety and stress.

Use of cognitive restructuring with children with ASD

Cognitive restructuring, a fundamental component of (CBT), can be highly beneficial for individuals with (ASD). While it is crucial to tailor the approach to each person's unique needs, cognitive restructuring techniques can help individuals with ASD manage anxiety, improve social skills, and enhance their overall quality of life.

In Emotion Regulation, Identifying Emotion, help individuals with ASD identify and label their emotions. Cognitive restructuring can assist in reframing overly intense emotional responses and finding appropriate ways to express feelings. Understanding Triggers, identify specific situations or stimuli that trigger emotional responses. Once identified, work on restructuring thoughts related to these triggers to promote more adaptive emotional reactions.



Benefits of Cognition.

- **Identifying Negative thought:** the first step in cognitive restructuring is becoming aware of negative thoughts. This involves paying attention to the internal dialogue and recognizing when thoughts are overly negative, unrealistic, or unhelpful.
- **Examining Evidence:** Encourage individuals to evaluate the evidence supporting their negative thoughts. Often, people tend to focus only on information that confirms their negative beliefs while ignoring evidence to the contrary.
- **Reality Testing:** Encourage individuals to test the validity of their negative thoughts by examining whether they are based on facts or assumptions. This can involve gathering more information, seeking feedback from others, or testing out new behaviour.

Benefits of Emotional regulation:

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience. It involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's emotions in various situations. Emotional regulation is a crucial aspect of mental and emotional well-being and is essential for healthy relationships, decision-making, and overall life satisfaction. Emotional regulation can be particularly challenging for children with (ASD) due to sensory sensitivities, difficulties in communication, social interactions, and understanding emotions. However, with appropriate support and tailored strategies, children with ASD can learn and improve their emotional regulation skills.

- **Recognition of Emotions:** The first step in emotional regulation is the ability to recognize and identify one's emotions accurately. This involves being aware of the physiological sensations, thoughts, and behavioural cues associated with different emotions. By developing emotional awareness, individuals can gain insight into their internal experiences and better understand the triggers for their emotions.
- **Understanding Emotions:** Emotional regulation also requires an understanding of the underlying causes and meanings of emotions. This includes recognizing the situational, cognitive, and interpersonal factors that contribute to emotional experiences. Understanding the function of emotions and their adaptive value can help individuals respond to them more effectively.

Benefits of Emotional Regulation among children with ASD:

- **Improved Emotional Well-Being:**

- a) **Reduced Anxiety:** Learning to regulate emotions can reduce anxiety levels, helping children with ASD manage situations that might otherwise cause distress.
- b) **Enhanced Mood:** Effective emotional regulation can lead to a more stable and positive mood, improving overall emotional well-being.
 - **Better Social Interactions:**
 - a) **Improved Relationships:** Children who can regulate their emotions are better equipped to engage in positive social interactions, leading to improved relationships with peers, family, and caregivers.
 - b) **Reduced Social Isolation:** Enhanced emotional regulation skills can reduce social withdrawal and help children participate more comfortably in social activities.
 - **Improved Coping Skills:**
 - a) **Stress Management:** Emotional regulation skills provide effective coping mechanisms, helping children manage stress and challenging situations more effectively.
 - b) **Adaptability:** Children with strong emotional regulation skills are better equipped to adapt to changes in routines or unexpected events.

Significance of the Cognitive Restructuring Strategies are:

In cognitive restructuring, it focuses on the negative emotions or emotional regulation effecting the individual with ASD.

Here, it teaches children to alter their beliefs or behaviours to avoid negative emotions.

Cognitive behavioural therapy has two main parts.

The cognitive component helps children change how they think about a situation.

Whereas the behavioural component helps children change how they react to a situation so, through cognitive restructuring we can work on the child's behavioural concerns as well as practice some effective coping skills.

This study is based on the experimental method where we will be having two intervention groups that are controlled group and experimental group. In the present research study researchers used an Experimental research design to analyse the Effect of Cognitive Restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation among Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age from 5 to 12.

In this study, the researcher collected the data using a pretest, an intervention, and a post-test on the experimental group and the control group students. 40 Intervention sessions were provided to students using Cognitive Restructuring Strategies Manual

developed by the researcher itself. It includes Cognitive Restructuring activities preceding the activities of Emotional Regulation.

The research is using purposive sampling. The participants include both girls and boys with ASD. Participants will be taken from a special school. Subjects in this study were 20 Students both male and female having autism spectrum disorder. Children were drawn from primary grade classrooms of an urban area school.

Sample size Control and Experimental groups – Sample size comprises of 20 CWASD (10 CWASD in control group 10 CWASD in experimental group). Children diagnosed with were selected randomly and they were from 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade 5th. Children's case history was collected from the school counsellor and Special Educator.

20 students with autism spectrum disorder, both male and female, served as the study's subjects. Children were selected from a school in an urban location that included first grade classroom. Children from grades 2, 3, and 4 who had been identified with a were autism spectrum disorder chosen at random. The school counsellor and the special educator were contacted for the children's case histories. Children were split into two groups of ten, one of which served as the experimental group and the other as the control group.

During the pretest and post-test, a self-developed questionnaire was utilised to examine and evaluate the three chosen domains of emotional regulation in children with autism spectrum disorder. The research instrument was broken into three sections:

- Identifying and Expressing Emotions,
- understanding emotions and
- Coping emotions.

A restructuring manual that was self-designed was used for the intervention. The was created with understanding of the develop Cognitive restructuring Strategies Manual mental stage and needs of the children on whom the current study is based. The content of the Cognitive restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation Manual is the result of in-depth research into emotional regulation and coping challenging behaviour activities, domains, and key areas of emotional regulation, and how to connect Cognitive restructuring Strategies and emotional regulation.

Interpretation of Paired Sample t-test scores of Experimental Group to find the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation Among Children with autism spectrum disorder.

Emotional Regulation

Experimental Group	df	Mean	T- stat Calculated	p- value	Level of Significance
Pre-Test	9	44.5	28.4	0.002	Highly Significant
Post -Test	9	60	28.4	0.002	Highly Significant

As per the result of Paired Sample t- test as shown in table 3 if can be seen that the mean score of Pre- Test is $m_1=44.5$ while the post-test mean score is $m_2= 60$. Thus, there is a clear gain of $15.5(m_2-m_1)$ and found to be highly significant at 0.02 level (t stat calculated = 28.4, df = 9, $p = 0.002 < 0.02$).

Interpretation of Paired Sample t-test scores of Controlled Group to find the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation Among Children with autism spectrum disorder

Emotional Regulation

Controlled Group	df	Mean	T- stat Calculated	p- value	Level of Significance
Pre-Test	9	44	-15.0	0.010	Highly Significant
Post -Test	9	55.7	-15.0	0.002	Highly Significant

As per the result of Paired Sample t-test as shown in table 10 the mean score or Pretest is $m_1= 44$ while the post-test mean score is $m_2= 55.7$. There is a gain of $11.7 (m_2-m_1)$. It is not found to be significant at 0.01 level (t stat calculated = -15.0, df=9, $p= 0.01 > 0.01$)

Hence, considering the p value shows that, Cognitive Restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation have no level of significant effect on children with autism spectrum disorder.

Limitations

1. School Selected was limited to me.
2. Sessions were limited to 32 sessions.
3. No Resource room concept in Special School.
4. Students having autism spectrum disorder were only selected.

Conclusion:

The present research focuses on providing based Cognitive restructuring Strategies on Emotional Regulation for children autism spectrum disorder After reviewing the test results, it was found that Cognitive Restructuring Strategies Manual training has a significant effect on the effect of emotional regulation among children with autism spectrum disorder.

Cognitive Restructuring Strategies Manual provides instructions to parents, teachers for its effective use with children. It not only focuses on Emotional Regulation but also helps in this development of crucial domains of Emotional Restructuring.

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