



## Comparing the effectiveness of parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy and Self-regulation skill training on children's emotion control

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

### ABSTRACT

#### Article type

Original research

Pages: 123-135

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Email:

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#### Article history:

Received: 2022/06/27

Revised: 2022/11/01

Accepted: 2022/11/09

Published online:

2023/05/07

#### Keywords:

Self-regulation skill training, attachment-based therapy, parent-child therapy, emotion control.

**Background and Aim:** The purpose of the present study was to compare the effectiveness of parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy, and Self-regulation skill training on emotional control of preschool children. **Methods:** This research was carried out in the form of a semi-experimental design on 48 preschool students of Islam Shahr city with available sampling method and these people were randomly replaced in three experimental groups (n=36) and a control group (n=12). Then, the experimental groups underwent parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy, and Self-regulation skill training, and the control group did not receive any training. The data collection tool was the child's emotion management questionnaire (Ziman et al., 2001), which was administered before and after the training. Descriptive tables and statistical methods of one-way analysis of variance with differential scores, multivariate covariance analysis and Bonferroni adjustment test were used to describe and analyze the collected data. **Results:** The results show that, in the comparison between the effectiveness of each of the experimental groups on reducing the differential score of emotional control of preschool children, the results of the effect size showed, respectively, the parent-child interaction training groups ( $\eta^2=0.681$ ), the treatment based on Attachment ( $0.630=2\eta$ ) and Self-regulation skill ( $\eta^2=0.408$ ) had the highest impact on reducing differential scores of emotional control of preschool children. **Conclusion:** Therefore, paying attention to the mentioned variables helps senior managers and researchers in choosing managers and designing more suitable for cultivating wisdom.



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#### How to Cite This Article:

Shaukatpour Lotfi, Sh., Moghtader, L., & Akbari, B. (2023). Comparing the effectiveness of parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy and Self-regulation skill training on children's emotion control. *jayps*, 4(2): 123-135.

## Introduction

Most of the world's population is made up of children; While in developing countries, their population reaches 50% of the total population (Kouider et al., 2014). Therefore, it is undoubtedly one of the most important periods of childhood because the basis of mental health or psychopathology of adulthood is established in this period. Behavioral problems are one of the biggest challenges for parents and caregivers of preschool children. It may threaten the current and future health of these children and affects all aspects of their personal and social life. Moreover, it will create problems for the family, disrupt healthy development and overshadow the quality of care for these children (Karach, McLennan, Belanger and Nixon, 2017).

Excitement plays an important role in various aspects of life, such as adapting to life changes and stressful events. Basically, excitement can be considered biological reactions to situations that we evaluate as an important or challenging opportunity, and these biological reactions are associated with the response we give to those environmental events (Granefski et al., 2001).

How the child's relationship with family members, especially the mother, in the first years of life is considered one of the most important factors in character development. If there is a disturbance in this emotional relationship, the child's emotional security is disturbed and it affects the child's behavior (Milani Far, 2012). One of the most basic ways to improve the level of mental health in society is to teach how to establish proper communication and learn to establish effective and correct communication between members of a family. The contact between mother and child can be considered as the beginning of the first and most important communication openings between two people, because before birth and during fetal life, the formation of the first communication links between mother and child begins and continues after birth. (Janbozorgi et al., 2008). One of the most important therapeutic measures that has been noticed in recent years is attachment-based therapy. In emphasizing the importance of the mother-child relationship, Bowlby believes that what is necessary for the child's mental health is the experience of a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with the mother or her

substitute. He believes that many forms of neuroses and personality disorders are the result of the child's deprivation of maternal care or the instability of the child's relationship with an attachment figure. Attachment is a basic need for human development and is called a deep emotional bond that every person establishes with important people in his life to enjoy interacting with them and seek comfort from them in stressful times of life (Burke, 2007). The sense of security that comes from a secure attachment style contributes to all aspects of psychological development and enhances one's ability to cope with life's problems. Insecure attachment style makes a person vulnerable in the face of crises and hinders a person's healthy development (Burke, 2007). In Mahmoudi et al.'s (2013) research, the results showed that secure attachment style has a positive relationship with resilience. According to research results, secure attachment style can affect self-efficacy (Bander & Ingram, 2018) and finding meaning in life (Badner et al., 2014) and increase resilience.

Moreover, we can refer to the concept of Self-regulation that has been proposed in the last 30 years in order to achieve more effective learning (Nouri Samrin et al., 2009). Organizing and regulating the main processes of learning and related activities is done through academic Self-regulation. Strong indicators of academic Self-regulation learning include self-evaluation, organization, goal orientation, help seeking, environmental structures, and memory strategies, which have a positive relationship with academic progress (Magno, 2010). According to researchers in the social-cognitive field, Self-regulation refers to pre-programmed behaviors, feelings, and thoughts that continuously undergo changes based on feedback from individual performance in order to achieve desired goals (Cary & Seg, 2009). Santrak (2004; 2008) this type of learning is a combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills such as planning and organizing strategies for learning, setting goals, self-control, self-evaluation and resource management. In order to achieve goals, learners use emotional, cognitive, motivational and behavioral feedback to change or adapt their strategies and behaviors, such as achieving goals, learning control, motivation, behavior and cognition (Arabzadeh et al., 2012).

Parent-child relationships are also one of the most important approaches that have been taken into consideration. The family is the first and most durable factor that is known as the builder and foundation of the child's personality and subsequent behaviors, and even according to many psychologists, the root of many personality disorders and mental illnesses should be sought in the early upbringing in the family (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). In the training of parents, the whole family unit and its effect on the child are emphasized and the concerns that parents have about the causes, treatment and prognosis of their child's disorder are discussed and the necessary information and support are provided to the parents. In the light of new information, parents gain a better understanding of children's problems, and teaching child behavior control skills increases parents' sense of efficacy (Zargarinejad & Yazdan Dost, 2007).

Children and teenagers make up the majority of the population all over the world and especially in our country. Therefore, efforts should be made to properly recognize this huge class and to provide material and spiritual conditions necessary for their physical, emotional and intellectual growth. One of the major problems that has an inhibiting effect on the efficiency and dynamism of teenagers and prevents the healthy formation of their identity and the flourishing of their talents and intellectual and emotional powers is the concern about their acceptance and acceptance among their classmates and friends (Mehrabizadeh et al., 2009). Therefore, according to the above topics, this research seeks to answer this question: Is there a difference between the effectiveness of parent-child interaction, attachment-based therapy, and Self-regulation skill training on preschool children's emotion control?

### Method

This research is a quasi-experimental type that was conducted with a multi-group pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The statistical population includes preschool students of Islam Shahr in the academic year 2019-2020. First, one of

the preschool schools was selected using the available sampling method, and then 100 of these students who met the criteria for entering the research were randomly selected. Then 60 of these people were randomly selected and assigned to three experimental groups and one control group. According to the research entry criteria, 15 people in each experimental group were assigned to the experimental group and 15 people were assigned to the control group. After the implementation of the research, due to the fact that training sessions were held during the outbreak of the Corona disease, there were dropouts in two experimental groups of 3 people, and the researcher removed 3 people for comparison in other groups. In this research, there were 48 people who were randomly placed in three experimental groups and one control group. Then, the experimental groups underwent parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy and Self-regulation skill training for 2 months (10 sessions of 2 hours), and the control group did not receive any training.

### Materials

**1. Ziman et al.'s child emotion management questionnaire.** This questionnaire was created in 2001 by Ziman et al. and has 3 Likert rating scales (1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often). It has 38 questions and assesses the way children manage the emotions of anger (11 items), sadness (12 items) and worry (15 items). Each scale consists of 3 subscales: a) Inhibition, preventing the expression of emotion (for example, I'm upset inside but I don't show it); b) chaotic expression, culturally inappropriate emotional expression (for example, I say awkward words when I'm angry); c) Child's emotional coping, adaptive methods of child's emotion management (for example, I try to be calm about what upsets me). Examining the psychometric properties of CEMS shows Cronbach's alpha between 0.62 and 0.77. Retest reliability for 6 scales is between 0.61 and 0.8. In the worry scale, preliminary validity according to other studies (Setgall, 2003) shows that the overall worry score is positively related to parent and child reports of internal and external semiotics. This scale is standardized for 9-12-year-old children, but it is also used for children around 6 years old.

**2. Parent-child interaction training:** In this research, for the parent-child relationship, parent-child interaction training interventions were used in the manner of Paghandedeh et al.

Table 1. Content of parent-child interaction training sessions

Session	Goals	Content	Assignment
1	Establishing a good relationship	Familiarity of members with each other and the leader	How do you communicate with your children?
	Acquaintance and acceptance	Establishing good relationship and communication between members	What are the most important things in your educational methods?
	Knowing the content of the meetings		

	motivating	Familiarity with the concept of empathic communication and its components	What are the emotions that all people experience?
2	Getting feedback from the previous session and reviewing assignments Recognizing feelings and expressing them Recognize active listening skills Learn the skill of active listening and apply it	Expression of the Emotions Defining active listening skill and expressing its components Expression of simple openers Content reflection Introducing insulting messages Acquaintance with my messages and your messages Practicing active listening in role playing	Recognize your own and the child's feelings in relation to your child and write them down Use active listening skills with your child Write down your feelings after using active listening Write down the results of active listening compared to the use of disparaging messages.
3	Taking the load of the previous meeting and checking the assignment Correct recognition of other people's feelings Learning the skill of reflecting feelings Understanding the child's feelings	Introducing the five main emotions The ability to reflect emotions A way of expressing feelings Methods that are opposite to confirmation and reflection Emotions are used	This week, have a conversation with your child and accept his feelings Identify your child's feelings in different situations and reflect back to him Write the effects of emotional reflection on the parent-child relationship
4	Getting feedback from the previous session and reviewing assignments Expressing empathy correctly and learning its techniques Differentiate between empathy and sympathy Non-verbal communication Cognition, barriers to empathy Getting to know the concept of consonance	Definition of empathy The most important empathy techniques Methods of strengthening empathy The benefits and effects of empathy Common mistakes in expressing empathy Characteristics of empathetic people	Pay attention to the child's non-verbal behaviors and express his understanding After empathizing, write how you and your child feel? When you show empathy. Write down how your child's behavior is different from before?
5	Getting feedback from the previous session and checking assignments Helping parents to focus on the child's positive points Helping children to have a positive and realistic perception The child can praise himself after hearing the description Raising the child's self-esteem and self-confidence	Expressing praise for the assessment and its results Descriptive praise and its stages Parents' reaction to evaluative praise and descriptive praise Descriptive praise skill role playing	Write the following in different situations A compliment that is not useful Ƴ- Describe in detail what you see or feel ƴ- What does the child probably say to himself? -ƵPay attention to your child's behavior and use descriptive praise steps for him?
6	Getting feedback from the previous session and reviewing assignments Getting to know the concept of unconditional acceptance	Examining human needs The concept of conditional acceptance The concept of unconditional acceptance	- How do you accept people in your family? Identify the behaviors that indicate your conditional acceptance and turn them into

	and learning it Giving children a successful identity Raising children's sense of worth and self-confidence Accepting children as they are Improving the attitude of parents towards accepting children	The concept of self-concept Effects of conditional acceptance and love Effects of unconditional acceptance The concept of consonance in unconditional acceptance	unconditional acceptance. -Write down the behavioral changes that occur in your child by using unconditional acceptance.
7	Getting feedback from the previous session and reviewing assignments Mutual understanding of each other's feelings Learning the right methods of cooperation Getting children to cooperate without having negative feelings	Common methods of parents to make children cooperate Investigating children's emotions in common methods of cooperation Expressing the stages of cooperation skills	-Think about what you want your children to do during the day, then list your daily "don'ts". In connection with different situations: A: Write the sentences that hurt the child did not eat B: Use cooperation skills
8	Getting feedback from the previous session and reviewing assignments Knowing the substitute skills of punishment Learning problem solving methods Awareness and understanding of the child's emotions during punishment Understanding the psychological and social effects of punishment	Parental punishment methods Alternatives to punishment Five steps of troubleshooting Examining the feelings that arise after punishment in a child	Use a substitute for punishment for the week ahead. What substitute did you use and what was your child's reaction? Think of a problem that you regularly face at home and it might be easy to solve it with the problem solving method.
9	Getting feedback from the previous session and reviewing assignments Recognizing and understanding the feelings that arise during dependence Raising the sense of self-confidence and responsibility in children Giving children personality independence	Accepting the child's feelings Assignment of the right to choose Respect the child's efforts Do not ask too many questions Encourage him to use resources outside the home.	Encourage and practice at least two skills that make your child feel independent, competent and confident. What was your child's reaction and feeling towards the skills?
10	Summarizing and reviewing what has been learned - getting feedback Post-test implementation		

**3. Training of self-regulation skills:** Training sessions of self-regulation learning strategies (cognitive and meta-cognitive) were implemented based on the educational package of Karami et al. (2013).

Table 2. Content of self-regulated learning strategies training sessions

<b>1</b>	First step	The coach discusses the treatment process and meetings with the students' parents.
	Second step	Acquainting them with proper social behavior and antisocial behavior and...
	Third step	Explanation of each element of appropriate and inappropriate social behavior and the consequences that follow.
	Forth step	Practicing the elements of appropriate and inappropriate social behavior and the consequences that follow, by the student with the help and guidance of the instructor.
<b>2</b>	First step	Oral question and past lesson review.
	Second step	Presenting a diagram of emotion control elements and social skills components
	Third step	Playing the role of a socially acceptable behavior with all its elements to the students by the teacher.
	Forth step	Practicing and memorizing elements and components of acceptable social behavior by students with the help of mother and teacher.
<b>3</b>	First step	Class question of elements of planning and elements of correct behavior and review of past lessons
	Second step	Recalling the role-playing exercise of the previous session and reviewing what was said to check their current level of performance.
	Third step	At this stage, the instructor discusses with the students the elements of misbehavior and how to replace them with correct behavior.
<b>4</b>	First step	Review of planning elements and behavioral elements
	Second step	Modeling how to use the desired strategies in role-playing sessions by the coach.
<b>5</b>	First step	Introducing and presenting a list of appropriate social behaviors to the student's mother.
	Second step	Reading questionnaires related to emotional control and social skills of students in the pre-test and identifying their appropriate and inappropriate behaviors by the instructor in the presence of the student's mother.
	Third step	Setting the goal to perform the behavior in the next session with the cooperation of the coach, including: planning before performing a behavior, considering the consequences of the behavior, using the list of appropriate behaviors and inappropriate behaviors, and including the main elements of appropriate behavior.
<b>6 - 7</b>	First step	Reviewing the goals set in the previous meeting and emphasizing the importance of achieving them
	Second step	At this stage, students play a role with the support and cooperation of the instructor.
	Third step	Conduct appropriate and inappropriate behavior independently in the next meeting
<b>8</b>	First step	Review the goal set in the last session
	Second step	At this stage, after recollecting and practicing the material narrated in the previous sessions, the students are asked to perform appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.
	Third step	The instructor examines the students' behaviors, and discusses with them the elements of inappropriate social behavior and how to replace them with appropriate behavior.
	Forth step	Setting the goal for the next session: performing the behavior

		independently, without recalling the elements of appropriate and inappropriate behavior
9-10	First step	Review the goal set in the previous session
	Second step	At this stage, taking into account the age of the students, they are asked to perform an appropriate behavior and an inappropriate behavior independently without the guidance of the teacher or mother.
	Third step	A behavior coach who examines students and identifies the elements in it.

**4. Attachment-based education:** attachment-based education is an education that teaches mothers the therapeutic concepts of the principles of mother sensitization, the principles of appropriate response

to the child, the basics of empathic behavior from the mother, methods of attachment and communication (Diamond, 2008).

**Table 3. Content of attachment-based therapy sessions**

<b>Sessions 1 – 2 - 3</b>	Explaining the course of educational sessions, creating an environment and familiarizing with the basic concepts of attachment theory, examining the types of attachment and the characteristics of each of them in a meeting that was held in the presence of parents, children and their teachers.
<b>Session 4</b>	Proper and sufficient familiarity with the theory of attachment and psychological conflicts caused by the lack of secure attachment in the child's future will motivate, target and prepare mothers to change their behavior in order to improve the attachment pattern.
<b>Sessions 5 – 6</b>	Training to create open and supportive relationships
<b>Session 7</b>	Mutually supportive relationships, in which emotions are exchanged directly, makes the child feel confident about the parent.
<b>Session 8</b>	Getting to know the characteristics and needs of children based on their growing age
<b>Session 9</b>	Teaching mothers to constantly adapt their behavior to the growth of the child's capacities (according to age) and its needs, which helps in creating secure attachment.
<b>Session 10</b>	Increasing the self-awareness of mothers and recognizing the characteristics needed to raise a child with secure attachment

**Implementation**

After coordinating and obtaining permission, the child's emotion management questionnaire was implemented. The students who got low grades in these tests were selected as samples and then 60 people were randomly selected as the sample size. However, finally due to the drop in the number of people, training sessions were conducted with 48 students, thus the three experimental groups (n=12) and the control group (n=12) were reduced to groups of 12 people. While justifying the subjects and stating the objectives of the research, they were requested to participate in the training course. In addition, written consent was received to participate in the research.

Before starting the educational methods, all four studied groups were evaluated in the pre-test phase

and their parents and teachers were requested to complete the questionnaires carefully. The duration of the training sessions in each of the training methods was 10 sessions of 120 minutes, which were conducted as a group and twice a week in the winter of 2019, in a school designated by the Education Department of District 1. The training was conducted by a researcher and a PhD student in psychology. After completing the designated courses, the three groups under training and the control group were re-evaluated in the post-test stage, and then the obtained data were analyzed.

**Results**

Descriptive statistics findings are reported in the table below.

**Table 4. Descriptive indices of research variables by parent-child interaction groups, attachment-based therapy, Self-regulation skill training and control**

<b>Stage</b>	test-Pre	test-Post
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Variable	Group	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotion regulation	Self-regulation	26.25	3.07	0.100	-0.828	18.41	2.81	-0.837	1.67
	Control	26	3.01	0.072	-0.754	25.75	1.86	-0.978	-0.091
Feelings of anger	PCI	8.16	0.71	-0.262	-0.685	3.41	1.56	0.698	-0.986
	ABT	9.33	1.37	-0.217	-1.226	5.16	0.834	-0.354	-1.447
	Self-regulation	9.41	1.56	-0.157	-0.618	4.83	0.834	-0.771	1.14
	Control	8	1.20	-1.492	2.52	9.33	1.30	-0.154	-0.774
Mental regulation	PCI	8.25	0.96	0.136	-0.770	4.25	0.866	-0.567	-1.446
	ABT	9.33	1.61	-0.029	-0.966	5	0.852	-1.055	1.92
	Self-regulation	8.66	1.30	0.154	-0.774	4.41	1.08	-0.001	-1.15
	Control	9.25	1.42	0.384	-0.163	8.33	1.07	-0.275	-1.47
Worry	PCI	8.08	0.51	0.211	2.220	3.16	1.02	-0.388	1.099
	ABT	8.416	0.241	0.743	0.189	4.750	0.965	-0.136	-0.770
	Self-regulation	8.16	2.12	-1.42	0.921	9.16	2.08	0.388	3.273
	Control	8.75	1.48	0.312	-1.27	8.08	0.79	-0.161	-1.26

According to Table 1, the average scores of emotion control variables and its components in the groups of parent-child interaction training,

attachment-based therapy, and Self-regulation skill training have changed in the post-test stage compared to the pre-test stage.

**Table 5. Examination of the two-by-two differences between the experimental groups (parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy, Self-regulation and control skill training) in the differential score of emotion control**

Group		Mean diff	Standard error	Effect size	Sig.
PCI	PCI	-1.416	1.376	0.023	1
	Self-regulation	-5.*750	1.376	0.284	>.001
	Control	-13.*333	1.376	0.681	>.001
ABT	Self-regulation	-4.*333	1.376	0.184	0.018
	Control	-11.*916	1.376	0.630	>.001
Self-regulation	Control	-7.*583	1.376	0.408	>.001

\*P<0.05

The results show that the differential scores of emotion control have decreased in the groups of parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy and Self-regulation skills, respectively, compared to the control group, and according to the Ben Feroni adjustment test, this decrease was significant. In the comparison between the effects of each of the experimental groups on reducing the differential score of emotional control of preschool children, the results of the effect size showed: The parent-child interaction training groups ( $\eta=0.681$ ),

attachment-based therapy ( $\eta^2=0.630$ ) and Self-regulation skills ( $\eta^2=0.408$ ) had the highest effectiveness in reducing the emotional control differential scores of preschool children, respectively. In the comparison between the training groups, the results showed that the therapy training based on attachment and parent-child interaction had a greater reduction in the differential scores of preschool children's emotion control compared to the Self-regulation skill training group.

**Table 6. Results of one-way covariance analysis related to the intergroup difference of emotion control components**



Variable	SS	SS err.	MS	MS err.	F	P	$\eta^2$
Anger	188.116	59.053	62.705	1.440	43.536	>.001	0.761
Mental regulation	112.146	41.379	37.382	1.009	37.039	>.001	0.730
Worry	277.920	75.837	92.640	1.850	50.084	>.001	0.786

According to Table No. 3, the F statistic for the components of anger (43.536), mental adjustment (37.039) and worry (50.084) is significant ( $P < 0.01$ ). This finding shows that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in these components. The effect size is for the components of anger (0.761), mental adjustment (0.730) and worry (0.786).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of parent-child interaction training, attachment-based therapy and Self-regulation skills training on emotional control of preschool students. The results of the one-way analysis of variance with a differential score showed that, according to the significance of the F statistic, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in emotional control. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of emotional control in the post-test compared to the pre-test scores (differential score). There is no research that is directly in line with the current research, however, there are some studies that show that teaching children and their parents, including the mother, to interact properly brings positive results for both the child and the mother. For example, Shiralinia et al. (2018) showed in a research that improving the quality of the mother-child relationship by increasing the mental health of the mother and inviting to reduce the behavioral problems of preschool children. In explaining this finding, it should be said that the interaction therapy of single child parents is divided into two parts: In parent-parental interaction, parents learn skills to improve child obedience and reduce disruptive behaviors. These include the skills of issuing good commands, encouraging obedience, using restraints for disobedience, and establishing valid rules at home (Eddiford & Hembree-Kiggin, 2010). This therapy helps parents to make changes in their interactions to communicate confidently with their children. The use of the parent-child interaction program has improved and made significant progress in

reducing parents' stress and reducing external and internal concerns about their children and increasing parents' positivity towards their children (Allen et al., 2014). These abilities help parents to regulate their emotions in a more appropriate way and experience better emotions in general. The regulation of mothers' emotions also has very important consequences that some researches have pointed out.

In explaining this hypothesis, it can be said that the primary caregiver's sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's emotional states is the main determinant of learning the method of regulating emotions and relationships with others. Evidence shows that after three months of age, babies become sensitive and biased towards receiving external cues, including facial-vocal responses. These signs play an important role in teaching how to regulate the child's helplessness and emotions. Secure children receive appropriate and optimal responses from the primary caregiver and learn that the correct expression of emotions has positive consequences. Attachment is an interpersonal connection and relationship, and this connection is an emotional connection. It is certain that different emotions will be involved in this relationship and this relationship is relatively stable. Therefore, according to stable internal patterns (mental representation of self and others), the quality of this connection will affect wide areas of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships in the present and future. Finally, it has a direct effect on regulating one's emotions. In explaining this hypothesis, it can be said that the method of regulating emotions and relationship with others is formed according to the sensitivity and responsiveness of the mother (or those who are the primary caregivers of the child) to the child's emotional states. Insecure children do not experience optimal and consistent responsiveness from the primary caregiver and do not learn that balanced expression of emotions has positive consequences. Therefore, insufficient care and weakness and inability in maternal sensitivity and responsiveness (primary parent) lead to insecure attachment

behavior pattern (avoidance and ambivalence) and hinder the development of effective skills of regulating emotions and cognitions. Disturbance in the regulation of emotions, insufficiency and deficiency of the set of abilities necessary to regulate and control impulses, drivers, motivations, thoughts and actions that are responsible for the design and implementation of behavior, in insecure people are considered to be the product of this inadequate care. In fact, insecure people experience lower levels of positive emotions compared to safe ones and show inability to manage stress, anxiety, depression and other negative emotions. The main manifestation of these disabilities is the failure to understand, identify and express emotions and feelings.

#### Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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