

Effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy on Emotional Expression in Mother with Visual Impairment Children

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ABSTRACT

The ability of human relationships to continue healthily depends on individuals being aware of their emotions and being able to express them correctly. So, determining the variables that affect the emotional expression that are effective throughout individuals' lives can contribute to the positive maintenance of human relationships. This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy on emotional expression of mothers with visually impaired children. The present research was applied in terms of purpose and quasi-experimental in terms of method, it was a quasi-experiment with a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The total number of the statistical population was 90 people, 20 of the mothers were selected by convenience sampling method from schools for the blind in Isfahan city and were randomly replaced in a control group and an experimental group of 10 people. forgiveness therapy was provided to the experimental group in 12 sessions, while the control group did not receive any training until the end of the post-test phase. Participants were assessed using the Measure of Emotional expression questionnaire King and Emmons (1990). The obtained data were analyzed by analysis of covariance using SPSS 26 software. The findings indicated that forgiveness therapy approach had a positive and significant effect on emotional expression and on the expressing emotion subscales (expressing positive emotion, intimacy, and expressing negative emotion) of mothers with visually impaired children. Therefore, it can be concluded that the forgiveness therapy reduces expressing negative emotion and improves expressing positive emotion and intimacy of these mothers.

Keywords: Forgiveness Therapy, Emotional Expression, Mother with Visual Impairment Children, expressing positive emotion, intimacy, expressing negative emotion.

1. Introduction

Visual impairment refers to a condition where there is a decline in the functioning of an individual's visual system, resulting in various challenges such as decreased visual acuity, visual distortion, difficulties in perception, and a reduced ability to engage in everyday activities such as reading, writing, moving around, and participating in recreational pursuits (Rubab et al., 2025). The loss of vision in children has a significant impact on their developmental trajectory, as well as their overall well-being. This not only affects the child's personal growth but also poses challenges to the family dynamics and quality of life for parents (Broek et al., 2017). Scholars have further noted that caring for a disabled child is more tasking and demanding when compared to taking care of normal children. Scholars further observe that such condition exposes parents with a disabled child to financial and emotional difficulty and it may be quite challenging for parents without adequate mental preparation and readiness to cope (Ede, Anyanwu, et al., 2020; Ede, Omeje, et al., 2020).

Parents of children with visual impairments may manifest a tendency to an increased sense of helplessness, frustration, lack of attachment, guilt, lower self-esteem and self-blame. This is mainly because they do not really know what factors influence behavioral change in their children (Kucharczyk, 2024). The psychosocial concerns of parents of children with visual impairment reflects negative self-tolerance low and fears that their visually impaired child could be isolated, mocked and excluded by friends and relatives from indoor and outdoor recreational activities (Fathizadeh et al., 2012). Parents with visual impairment children take on additional parenting responsibilities such as making attempts to enhance the children's learning about social activities, self-care, and independence. Evidently, the parents who experience stress and psychological pressure cannot fulfill their parenting roles and, eventually, may even harm the children's social, psychological and physical growth (Sanders, 2012). Also, psychological status of the parents with a visual impairment child, is found to have a profound effect on the child's life.

In these families, mothers are exposed to the stressors more often than other family members, because, in most families, they are the primary caregivers (Montes & Halterman, 2007). Mothers experience a unique, complex, and incomparable relationship with their children from the moment they realize they are pregnant. Mothers' expectations and hopes for their unborn children are intense

and omnipresent. For mothers who give birth to children with special needs those expectations and hopes are often disrupted when their babies are born (Coleman, 2010). For a mother, the existence of especially needs children will have an impact on their lives so that it will bring up various emotions and negative reactions. Among them are shock, distrust, sadness, reject reality, and feel guilty (Nur et al., 2020).

Emotional expressions facilitate reciprocal regulation of interaction between child and mother, thereby fostering the development of emotional experiences (Tronick, 2018). A person's self-evaluation, readiness to think and act, and their impact on others are closely tied to emotional expression (Öngören, 2024). Expressed emotion is a complex construct that focuses on parents' verbal and nonverbal expressions about their children and the emotional quality of the relationship (Calam & Peters, 2006). Expression of criticisms, excessive worry, and dissatisfaction of family members' behavior are primary elements of expressed emotion (McCarty & Weisz, 2002). The researches on expressed emotion revealed that mothers who expressed critical or emotionally over-involved views of their children are more likely to have harsher parenting practices and to be more over-protective (Calam & Peters, 2006).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of expressing emotions on human life (Arığ, 2019). Positive emotions, which come to the forefront in the expression of emotion, can create an effect that enriches the physical, intellectual, and social networks of children by expanding their repertoire of thoughts and actions (Fredrickson, 2004). Also, studies indicate that when individuals suppress their negative emotions, they are more affected by personal problems such as depressed mood, fatigue, low self-esteem and low life satisfaction, and they feel reduced relationship satisfaction (Cameron & Overall, 2018). Some researcher stated that children whose parents express more negative emotions and less positive emotions are more likely to blame themselves for the conflict in their relationships with their parents. When the positive, intimacy and negative emotional expressions of mothers are evaluated in terms of both mothers and children, it can be said that they are effective on the lives of individuals (Fosco & Grych, 2007).

It can be said that emotional expressions are used to manage emotions in social relationships and work effectively in shaping personal well-being and relationships. Research focusing on maternal emotional expressions and emotional competence underscores their significant impact on children (Corapci et al., 2018). In one study, it was

revealed that the emotional expression levels of mothers were higher than their children's, and that the mother's emotional expression affected the child's emotional expression (Işık-Uslu & Turan, 2021). So, it is very important to understand the factors affecting the emotional expressions of mothers, which are pivotal in the mother-child relationship.

studies have suggested that forgiveness therapy is one of the common psychological treatments that can be effective on the mental health and emotional expression. In fact by enhancing forgiveness and emotional regulation abilities, individuals may be better equipped to navigate challenges and maintain psychological well-being (Parveen & Pal, 2024). Additionally, forgiveness therapy incorporates relaxation techniques and self-compassion exercises, which contribute to reducing physiological arousal and stress levels (Hikmat et al., 2025). For example, in one study it was found that forgiveness therapy can improve subjective well-being in the families of patients with chronic illnesses (Diana et al., 2023). According to the results of this study, it can be said that forgiveness therapy increased mental health and marital intimacy in people under education (Jafari et al., 2023). In addition, the results of another study showed that trust and forgiveness, played a significant role in marital intimacy in dual-earner husbands or wives (Avanti & Setiawan, 2022). The results of another article indicate that forgiveness therapy can improve the well-being of women victims of sexual abuse (Wijaya & Widiyastuti, 2019). A systematic review and meta-analysis research provided moderate quality evidence indicating that process-based forgiveness interventions were effective in improving mental wellbeing following a range of significant hurts among diverse population groups (Akhtar & Barlow, 2018). The results of another article also showed that the forgiveness therapy was potentially helpful in improving forgiveness and overall health, and in decreasing state anger of this particular sample of women with fibromyalgia who were abused in childhood (Lee & Enright, 2014). So, in general forgiveness has been shown to be positively correlated with mental health and enhances wellbeing (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018; Xie et al., 2020). Given this situation, we argue that there is a paucity of intervention designed to help mothers of visually impaired children express and manage their emotions. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the effect of forgiveness therapy on emotional expression of mothers with visually impaired children.

The research hypotheses are:

- 1- Forgiveness therapy is effective on emotional expression of mothers with visually impaired children.
- 2- Forgiveness therapy increases the positive emotional expression in mothers with visually impaired children.
- 3- Forgiveness therapy reduces the negative emotional expression in mothers with visually impaired children.
- 4- Forgiveness therapy increases intimacy expression in mothers with visually impaired children.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was applied research with a quasi-experimental design including pre-test, post-test with a control group. The studied research community consisted of mothers of children with visual impairment in Isfahan in 2023- 2024, who were selected by a simple random method from Blind and visually impaired schools. In order to select subjects, the researcher referred to the Department of Education and after getting permission, she went to the schools of blind and visually impaired children, and invited the parents with the conditions to participate in the meetings. Among the people who registered in the call, 20 mothers who met the criteria for entering and exiting the study were selected. The inclusion criteria are: willingness to participate in the research; having a child with mild to moderate visually impairment; age range between 25 and 50 years, and at least a bachelor's degree for mothers. The exclusion criteria are: divorce or separation from spouse and children; Absence of more than two sessions in the educational program; taking medical or psychiatric drugs; simultaneous participation in other educational courses; Having any neurological or sensory disorder except visual impairment in children. Then the mothers were randomly divided into two groups of 10 people, experimental and control. The training course was implemented as follows: first, each experimental and control group completed the questionnaire as a pre-test. Then, the experimental group of 10 people underwent forgiveness therapy in 12 sessions of 60 minutes, one session per week. While for the control group, no special action was taken, and the training sessions were placed on the waiting list. After the training sessions, the post-test was administered.

2.2. Measure

Designed by King and Emmons in 1990, this questionnaire assesses emotional expression and includes 16 items across three subscales: positive emotional expression,

intimacy expression, and negative emotional expression. Scoring is based on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items 6, 8, and 9 are reverse scored due to their negative emotional direction. The total score ranges from 19 to 80, with higher scores indicating higher emotional expression. They reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70, 0.74, and 0.63 for the subscales, and a significant positive correlation of 0.55 with the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire for convergent validity (King & Emmons, 1990). In Bahrami mashoof and colleagues 'study (2022), Cronbach's alpha was 0.70 (Bahramimashoof et al., 2022).

2.3. Intervention

The forgiveness therapy intervention used in this study was based on Eileen Barker's (2009) structured 12-session protocol and was implemented by the lead researcher, a doctoral student in the field of psychology of children with special needs who had completed certified training in forgiveness therapy (Barker, 2009). Conducted in weekly 60-minute sessions, the intervention was designed to help participants navigate the emotional and cognitive processes of forgiveness through guided self-reflection and cognitive-emotional restructuring. In Session 1, participants were introduced to the concept and objectives of forgiveness therapy and asked to identify individuals—including themselves, family members, and even metaphysical entities like God or nature—whom they felt the need to forgive. Session 2 focused on articulating specific resentments, encouraging participants to select one event and describe it in full detail, including the people involved, what happened, and their accompanying thoughts and emotions. Session 3 guided them in deconstructing the story of resentment by taking personal responsibility for their feelings, eliminating victimhood narratives, and reframing the event with a neutral perspective. In Session 4, participants examined the emotional and psychological toll of their resentment stories, identifying how these narratives had affected their lives and questioning the value of holding on to them. Session 5 centered on wound healing through identifying and challenging false self-beliefs that arose from the hurtful

event. During Session 6, participants were guided to find grace by exploring the personal growth and learning that could only have emerged from the painful experience. Session 7 assessed their readiness to forgive by identifying internal resistance and understanding its origins. Session 8 helped them recognize positive intentions—both their own and the offender's—embedded within the old resentment narratives. Session 9 introduced the concept of self-forgiveness, encouraging participants to cease self-judgment and develop a positive, affirming internal narrative. In Session 10, they rewrote their story of resentment incorporating positive intentions, self-forgiveness, and appreciation for the event. Session 11 aimed to consolidate this new narrative through daily review and visual reminders over 30 days, reinforcing behavioral and emotional change. Finally, in Session 12, participants were encouraged to complete any remaining emotional or expressive steps to solidify their experience of forgiveness, thereby achieving a sense of closure and emotional release.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the analysis of variance test with repeated measurements in SPSS 26 software.

3. Findings and Results

The study compares demographic characteristics of mothers in experimental and control groups with children who have visual impairments. Mothers in the experimental group have an average age of 38.50 years, while those in the control group average 39 years. Boys represent a higher percentage in control group (60%) and Girls represent a higher percentage in experimental group (60%). The educational levels of parents show a higher percentage of diploma 's degrees in the control group (70%) compared to the experimental group (50%).

Descriptive indicators of expressing emotion and its subscales [expressing positive emotion, intimacy, and expressing negative emotion] in the control and intervention groups in the pre-test and post-test phases are showed in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive indicators of expressing emotion and its subscales

Variables	Phase	Intervention group		Control group	
		M	SD	M	SD
Expressing positive emotion	Pre-test	24.30	4.05	23.70	3.91
	Post-test	28.00	3.23	23.10	3.81
Intimacy	Pre-test	20.20	3.67	17.10	4.14
	Post-test	21.50	3.13	16.80	4.31
Expressing negative emotion	Pre-test	15.10	3.92	13.00	2.94
	Post-test	13.20	3.76	13.50	3.24
Expressing emotion	Pre-test	59.60	7.19	53.80	9.22
	Post-test	62.70	7.36	53.40	9.20

As shown in Table 1, there is a big change in the mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test in the intervention group, while the change in the mean scores in the control group seems to be less. Shapiro-Wilks test approved the normality of these scores ($p > .05$). To explore the impact of the forgiveness therapy program on expressing emotion in

the intervention group, the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption was investigated and confirmed ($F = .47$, $p = 1.16$). The Levene's test showed the homogeneity of variances ($F = 1.79$, $p = .19$). Therefore, the ANCOVA hypotheses were met and the results are provided in Table 3.

Table 2

ANCOVA results for expressing emotion

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Eta ²	Test power
Pre-test	1211.28	1	1211.28	525.14	.001	.96	1.00
Group	55.41	1	55.41	24.02	.001	.58	0.99
Error	39.21	17	2.30				
Total	1682.95	19					

According to Table 2, the forgiveness therapy had a significant effect on the post-test scores of expressing emotion ($F = 24.02$, $p < .001$). Eta square indicated that 58 percent of the variation in expressing emotion is due to the forgiveness therapy program. To explore the impact of the forgiveness therapy on the expressing emotion subscales (expressing positive emotion, intimacy, and expressing negative emotion), the Box M test suggested the variance-covariance equality ($\text{Box } M = 60.67$, $p = .005$). The regression line slope was investigated and approved ($p > .05$). Bartlett test showed an appropriate correlation between

research variables [$p = .001$]. Also, the Leven test confirmed the homogeneity of the variances ($p > .05$); Then, the MANCOVA assumptions were met. Therefore, to explore the difference between the groups in expressing positive emotion, intimacy, and expressing negative emotion, the Roy largest root test was run ($F = 22.59$, $p = .001$). Based on this, it was found that the intervention and control groups were different from each other. To investigate the differences, the MANCOVA test was run, the results of which are provided in Table 3.

Table 3

MANCOVA results for expressing emotion subscales

Dependent variables	Sources	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Eta ²	Test power
Expressing positive emotion	Pre-test	71.99	1	71.99	56.47	.001	.79	1.00
	Group	46.32	1	46.32	36.34	.001	.70	1.00
	Error	19.12	15	1.27				
	Total	344.95	19					
Intimacy	Pre-test	110.52	1	110.52	41.33	.001	.73	1.00
	Group	12.61	1	12.61	4.17	.046	.23	.52
	Error	40.11	15	2.67				
	Total	366.55	19					
Expressing negative emotions	Pre-test	127.22	1	127.22	51.87	.001	.77	1.00
	Group	25.36	1	25.36	10.34	.006	.40	.85
	Error	36.78	15	2.45				
	Total	222.55	19					

As shown in Table 3, the forgiveness therapy had a significant effect on post-test scores of expressing positive emotion ($F = 36.34$, $p < .001$), intimacy ($F = 4.17$, $p < .04$), and expressing negative emotion ($F = 10.34$, $p < .006$). Eta square indicated that 68, 23, and 40 percent of the variation in expressing positive emotion, intimacy, and expressing negative emotion are due to the forgiveness therapy program.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of forgiveness therapy on the emotion challenges faced by mother of children with visual impairments. The research findings indicated a significant positive effect of the forgiveness therapy on mitigating these emotional issues. These outcomes are consistent with previous studies (Akhtar & Barlow, 2018; Avanti & Setiawan, 2022; Diana et al., 2023; Jafari et al., 2023; Wijaya & Widiyastuti, 2019) which have highlighted the role of forgiveness therapy on the marital intimacy of a group of couples, its influence on most mental health indicators which increases life satisfaction and interpersonal relationships, its helps to reduce the level of neuroticism experienced by a person, the effect of that on the reduction of negative emotions, characterized by the reduction of the desire to take revenge or avoid the offender, its effect on psychological health, reducing depression, anger, hostility, stress and psychological distress and promoting positive emotions and its role in improving

emotional health such as self-esteem, hope and life satisfaction and reducing mental health problems for example; depression, anxiety and stress. Therefore, it can be concluded that is necessary for the communication, emotional, spiritual and physical development of human beings.

In the explanation of the first hypothesis, it can be said the reason for the positive effects of forgiveness therapy may be cause that people who ignore the mistakes of others and forgive them, are people who have a positive mood about others and try to look at things in life with positive thinking, so, this can make them happy. In forgiveness, a deliberate effort is made to overcome hurtful feelings and thoughts to guarantee one's mental health. Also, in teaching forgiveness, the attitudes of kindness, compassion, and care are consciously involved, which helps to increase a person's control over emotional reactions, physical arousal caused by worry, and automatic behaviors (Diana et al., 2023). The review has revealed that forgiveness is a way to let go of negative emotions in response to the hurtful behaviours of others. It reduces general mental health problems like depression, stress but also promotes positive emotions such as mental well-being and is required to replace unpleasant, negative emotions like anger, frustration. By forgiving others, people could reduce negative emotions and find happiness that can improve their psychological well-being (Singh & Singh, 2023).

In the explanation of the second hypothesis, it can be said that without internalizing forgiveness, any individual cannot

stimulate subjective happiness. Forgiveness improves positive thinking and happiness represents positive emotions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Individuals who have greater levels of forgiveness reported greater levels of subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and more positive emotions (Gao et al., 2022). Forgiveness can help in improving happiness, spiritual and subjective well-being among adolescents. Also, it can help in improving happiness, spiritual and subjective well-being among adolescents (Wulandari & Megawati, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that happiness and well-being can be enhanced by enhancing the level of forgiveness.

In the explanation of the third hypothesis, it can be said that studies have shown that self-compassion, emotional intelligence, external social support, and parental skills and abilities may significantly reduce parental stress and alleviate burnout (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018). In fact, by enhancing forgiveness and emotional regulation abilities, individuals may be better equipped to navigate challenges and maintain psychological well-being (Parveen & Pal, 2024). In emotional forgiveness negative emotions are replaced by positive, other-oriented emotions such as understanding and compassion, which have direct benefits for physical and mental health (Onyemaechi et al., 2022). In addition, Forgiveness lifts a burden, as the forgiver no longer have negative feelings toward the transgressor, and gains a better understanding of them which improve their health and outlook (Raj et al., 2016). Thus, it is not incorrect to say that forgiveness is linked to better health as it actively reduces the duration and intensity of negative emotional states (Singh & Singh, 2023). forgiveness is needed to replace unpleasant, negative emotions like anger, frustration (Tekinalp & Terzi, 2012). The forgivers report the reduced level of depression, anxiety, and aggression, which enhances the quality of life, and physiological benefits like low stress levels (Mullen et al., 2023).

In the explanation of the forth hypothesis, it can be said that forgiveness is considered to be the motivation constructing relationships after interpersonal offend occurred. It increases the possibilities to make a positive relation to intimacy and improve the closeness level, demonstrating the interpersonal relation quality. Forgiveness can also become a requirement to rebuild a broken relationship after the occurrence of mistake and betrayal. This means that the better someone gives forgiveness, the better friendship intimacy tied, even when the conflict in friendship has occurred (Aisyah & Agung, 2020).

It can be concluded that forgiveness teaches the participants to turn to the source of stress and, by releasing anger in constructive ways, see the incident of resentment from the point of view of the wronged person, examine the reasons for the occurrence of resentment, and examine the individual's own contribution to the occurrence of resentment create emotional, cognitive and behavioral changes in themselves. Specifically, the findings of this article indicated that forgiveness therapy approach had a positive and significant effect on emotional expression and on the expressing emotion subscales (expressing positive emotion, intimacy, and expressing negative emotion) of mothers with visually impaired children. Therefore, it can be concluded that the forgiveness therapy reduces expressing negative emotion and improves expressing positive emotion and intimacy of these mothers.

It's crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which focused solely on mother of visual impairment children, in Isfahan and the lack of follow-up records. Thus, caution should be exercised in generalizing these findings across different demographics.

In light of these results, it is recommended that medical, educational, and rehabilitation centers for children with visual impairments incorporate this program into their services. Moreover, the development of training workshops for counselors and psychologists specializing in exceptional education is advised, ensuring they are equipped to integrate these practices into their support for families of children with visual impairments. This approach not only promises to enhance emotional expression of this mothers but also contributes to the broader goal of ameliorating the mental health, thereby improving their overall quality of life.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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