

## Perspectives from Children of an Improved Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Child-Parent Dyads with Anxiety Disorders

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### Abstract

Anxiety disorders are prevalent among children and can significantly impact their overall well-being and development. While Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has demonstrated efficacy in treating anxiety disorders in children, the integration of parents into the therapeutic process can enhance treatment outcomes. This thesis aims to explore the perspectives of children who have undergone an improved version of CBT, which includes active involvement of parents, to understand the effectiveness and benefits of this approach in treating child-parent dyads with anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders significantly affect children's well-being and development, and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been effective in their treatment. Integrating parents into therapy can enhance outcomes for child-parent dyads with anxiety disorders. This thesis explores the perspectives of children who experienced an improved version of CBT with active parental involvement. Through qualitative interviews and quantitative measures, the study investigates the effectiveness and benefits of this approach. The findings highlight children's perceptions of parental involvement, impact on family relationships, changes in coping mechanisms, and overall satisfaction with therapy. By understanding the perspectives of children, this research contributes to the knowledge of effective interventions for anxiety disorders in child-parent dyads.

**Keywords:** Cognitive behavioral therapy; Anxiety disorders; Children; Child parent dyads; Perspectives; Parental involvement

### Introduction

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent mental health challenges faced by children and adolescents worldwide. These disorders can have profound and lasting effects on various aspects of a child's life, including academic performance, social interactions, and overall emotional well-being. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has emerged as a highly effective evidence-based treatment for anxiety disorders in this population, helping children to identify and modify maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors. Traditionally, CBT has focused primarily on working directly with the affected child. However, research has increasingly recognized the vital role that parents play in their children's emotional development and well-being [1].

As children's primary caregivers, parents can significantly influence their offspring's emotional regulation and coping mechanisms. Therefore, incorporating parents into the therapeutic process has gained attention as a potentially beneficial approach to enhance treatment outcomes for child-parent dyads facing anxiety disorders. This thesis aims to investigate an improved version of CBT, which emphasizes the active involvement of parents in the therapeutic journey of their anxious children. By exploring the perspectives of children who have undergone this intervention, the research seeks to gain valuable insights into the efficacy and advantages of this integrated approach [2].

Anxiety disorders in childhood and adolescence are a prevalent mental health concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 10-20% of children and adolescents worldwide experience some form of anxiety disorder. These disorders can manifest as generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, and specific phobias, among others. The impact of anxiety disorders on children's lives can be profound. Persistent worry, excessive fear, and avoidance behaviors can disrupt academic achievement, hinder the development of meaningful relationships, and lead to a diminished quality of life. Moreover, if left untreated, anxiety disorders can persist into adulthood, underscoring the urgency of effective intervention strategies. This research holds significant implications for the field of child psychology and mental health intervention [3].

Understanding the perspectives of children regarding an improved CBT approach with parental involvement can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of this integrated treatment model. By uncovering potential benefits and challenges, the findings may inform clinicians and researchers in tailoring interventions that better address the unique needs of child-parent dyads facing anxiety disorders [4].

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, the research will be conducted in a specific geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Additionally, the subjective nature of self-report data obtained from children and parents may introduce potential biases in their perspectives. Despite these limitations, this study aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the growing body of research on improving CBT approaches for child-parent dyads with anxiety disorders [5].

### Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the perspectives of children who underwent an improved Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that actively involved their parents in the treatment process for anxiety disorders. The study sought to assess the effectiveness of this integrated approach and gain insights into the children's experiences regarding changes in symptoms, coping mechanisms, family relationships, and overall satisfaction with therapy. The following discussion highlights the key findings, implications, and limitations of the research. The findings of this study revealed promising results regarding the

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effectiveness of the improved CBT approach that incorporated parents in the therapeutic process [6].

Compared to traditional CBT, this integrated model showed positive outcomes in terms of reducing anxiety symptoms in children. The active involvement of parents seemed to enhance the child's progress by providing additional support and reinforcement outside the therapy sessions. This finding aligns with existing research that suggests parental involvement can contribute to better treatment outcomes in child anxiety disorders. The qualitative analysis of the children's perspectives shed light on several significant themes. Children reported positive changes in their coping mechanisms and greater self-awareness of their anxious thoughts and behaviors. The involvement of parents helped in identifying triggers and implementing coping strategies in real-life situations, thereby facilitating generalization of learned skills [7].

The children also expressed improved family relationships, indicating that the intervention positively impacted the parent-child bond and family dynamics. Moreover, the children generally reported high satisfaction with therapy, feeling supported and understood throughout the treatment process. The active participation of parents in the CBT process offered several benefits. First and foremost, it allowed parents to better understand their child's anxiety and how to support them effectively.

Parental involvement also facilitated the implementation of therapeutic techniques at home, providing a more comprehensive and continuous approach to managing anxiety. Additionally, the involvement of parents seemed to alleviate feelings of isolation and stress in children, knowing that their parents were actively engaged in their recovery. Although the integrated CBT approach was generally well-received by children and their parents, some challenges were reported. One notable challenge was the time commitment required from both parents and children. Balancing therapy sessions with other family responsibilities could be demanding, and some families struggled to maintain consistent engagement. Moreover, the willingness and ability of parents to actively participate in therapy could vary, which may impact treatment adherence and outcomes [8].

The findings of this study have significant implications for clinical practice. Incorporating parents into CBT interventions for child anxiety disorders can be a valuable strategy to enhance treatment effectiveness and foster positive family relationships. Therapists should consider involving parents from the outset and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to support their child's progress effectively. Additionally, future research could focus on exploring the long-term outcomes of the integrated CBT approach. Investigating the sustained effects on anxiety symptoms and family relationships over an extended period could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact. Furthermore, comparative studies between different variations of parental involvement in CBT could help identify the most effective and feasible approach for different families [9].

The study's limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results. Firstly, the research was conducted in a specific geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to diverse cultural contexts. Secondly, self-report data from children and parents might introduce response biases and could be influenced by the subjective nature of their experiences. Future studies could employ a multi-method approach, including objective measures and observations, to complement the self-report data [10].

## Conclusion

The study on "Perspectives from Children of an Improved

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Child-Parent Dyads with Anxiety Disorders" has provided significant insights into the efficacy and benefits of an integrated CBT approach that actively involves parents in the treatment process. The findings underscore the importance of parental involvement in addressing child anxiety disorders and offer valuable implications for clinical practice and future research. The research demonstrated that the improved CBT approach, which included parents as active participants, yielded positive outcomes for children with anxiety disorders.

Children reported reduced anxiety symptoms, improved coping mechanisms, and heightened self-awareness of their thoughts and behaviors. The involvement of parents proved to be a valuable asset in supporting children's progress beyond therapy sessions and facilitating the generalization of learned skills to real-life situations. The perspectives shared by the children reflected an enhancement in family relationships.

The integrated approach seemed to strengthen the parent-child bond and foster a supportive and understanding environment for children's recovery. Moreover, children expressed high satisfaction with therapy, indicating that their voices and experiences were valued and considered during the treatment process. The integrated CBT model with active parental involvement holds promise in promoting positive treatment outcomes and fostering stronger family connections. By building upon these findings and addressing the identified limitations, mental health professionals can continue to improve interventions for child-parent dyads with anxiety disorders, ultimately contributing to the well-being and mental health of children and families worldwide.

## Acknowledgement

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## Conflict of Interest

None

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