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Distress Intolerance in the Parents of Substance Dependent Patients

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine levels of Distress Tolerance (DT) and to compare levels of DT and depression, anxiety in the parents of substance dependent patients. This sample included 40 parents of inpatients undergoing treatment for substance dependence (SDPP) in the Balıklı Rum Hospital, Istanbul, Turkey. A healthy control group was recruited of 40 individuals with no Axis I diagnoses that were matched by gender with the SDPP group. All study participants completed a sociodemographic data form and the Beck Depression Inventory, the Beck Anxiety Inventory, the State & Trait Anxiety Inventory, and the Distress Tolerance Scale. DSM-IV-TR Axis I diagnoses were evaluated by psychiatrists through face to face interviews in which a Structured Clinical Interview (SCID I) was administered. We found a statistically significant lower level of distress tolerance (DT) in our SDPP group. A negative relationship was found between levels of DT, depression and anxiety. Lots of studies also showed that negative emotional states in the parents of substance dependent patients had negative effects upon those patients during their treatment process. For this reason, we recommend routine screening in the levels of DT, depression and anxiety in the Parents of Substance Dependent Patients (SDPPs).

Keywords: substance use, distress tolerance, anxiety, depression

1. Introduction

Distress Tolerance (DT) is defined as the capacity to experience and to tolerate negative psychological conditions (Simons and Gaher, 2005). According to Simons and Gaher (2005), distress could show up as a result of cognitive and physical processes but appear as an emotional state. Distress tolerance comprises all kinds of emotional states and reveals an individual's ability to manage and bring them under control (Brown et al., 2005).

The concept of distress tolerance was first described by Linehan (1993). Linehan (1993) suggested that patients with borderline personality disorder had low levels of capacity to tolerate distress. Along with this line, impulsive behaviors observed in these patients were intended to reduce their distress.

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