


The Effect of Group Guidance Program on Family Stress and Burnout Levels for Parents of Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the group guidance program on family stress and burnout scores of parents who have children with special needs. Pre-test, post-test quasi-experimental control grouped design was used in the study. There were four parents (mother) in the experimental group and four parents (mother) in the control group. The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were used as data collection tools. The group guidance program, which was developed by Ayşe Çin in 2001 and consists of eight sessions was applied to the experiment group. Group guidance was conducted online through the Zoom Meetings program, considering the ethical principles of online counseling due to the COVID-19 process. Group guidance was applied to the experimental group between 31.05.2021 and 25.07.2021. Control group has not been subjected to any application. Significance of differences in pre-test post-test scores of subjects were analyzed with Mann Whitney U test. The research findings showed that the group guidance program had a significant effect on the family stress levels and burnout levels of the parents in the experimental group. Based on the research findings, comments were made and suggestions for practice and research were developed.

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INTRODUCTION

At the dictionary of Turkish Language Association definition of family is as follows; "The smallest union in the society formed by the relations between husband, wife, children, siblings, based on marriage and blood ties" (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2021). Family adapts to changes in the outer world (environmental) while maintaining the functioning of its own system (Nazlı, 2014). As in other systems it is in constant interaction with family values in order to protect its natural balance and maintain it. In some cases, the balance of the family system may be disrupted by a situation that may originate from outside or a situation that may arise from within the system itself (Bitter & Corey, 2001). For example, in the family system, if the child is faced with a serious health problem or any disability after birth serious crisis situations may occur in the family (Fortier & Wanlass, 1984; Floyd & Zmich, 1991). During the developmental processes of the child difficulties and expectations, leaves parents in stress-induced crisis situations and affects their life quality negatively (Habib, Asmat & Naseem, 2016).

Many parents experience stress as their children goes through developmental stages in the family (Ardıç, 2010). With the birth of the child, the expectation of the family about the child's health is not realized, and the determination of the child's special needs begins to disrupt the healthy family structure, and family psychology is negatively affected (Dereli & Okur, 2008). When there are children with special needs in the family, the care burden of the parents' increases (Kazak, 1987; Kazak & Marvin 1984), and as a result of this, the stress level of the parents may increase (Bilal & Dağ, 2005; Sarı, 2007; Uğuz, Toros, İnanç, & Çolakkadioğlu, 2004). Atasoy (2022) determined that families with mentally disabled children have high stress levels.

The definition of stress by Baltaş & Baltaş (2013) is as follows: "It is a situation that occurs when the physical and mental limits of the organism are threatened and forced". When the expectation of the family about the child and the real situation are compared, the size of the difference between these two situations increases the severity of the stress that the family will experience. The hardening and inflexibility of the attitudes of families with children with special needs brings about the hardening of their reactions to the problems that the family will experience, and accordingly, the level of stress experienced by the parents in the family increases (Ardıç, 2010). The stress factor experienced by the parents in the family transforms and changes the existing relationships. In this case, the emotional problems of the parents in families with children who has special needs increase, the communication within the family weakens, and the conflicts of the family with the immediate environment increase. Therefore, it is important to keep the stress that the family who have a child with special needs under control during the adaptation process to the disability (Ardıç, 2010), and accordingly, burnout that may occur due to long-term stress can also be prevented.

Due to the excessive sense of responsibility in the care process of the child with special needs, situations such as depression and stress that may occur in the parents, especially in the mothers, increase the possibility of showing the symptoms of burnout in the future (Temel, 2015). Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) expressed the concept of burnout as follows: Experiencing feelings such as chronic fatigue, bodily exhaustion, hopelessness and helplessness, and the negative development of self-concept in the individual, and mental, emotional, cognitive and physical exhaustion that manifests itself with negative behaviors and attitudes towards other people during the time spent in daily and business life. It has been determined that the concept of burnout, which was first defined on working individuals, may be related not only to work life but also to the parenting process (Norberg, 2007; Shearn & Todd, 1997; Weiss, 2002) depending on the nature of long-term exposure to stress. One of the important reasons for the emergence of burnout is that the expectations of the individual are unrealistic and away from reality, and there is no harmony between expectations and reality (Tümkiye, 1996). As the difference between the family's future expectations and the current

situation of the family, which is directly related to stress, increases, the difficulties experienced in the family increase and the family has difficulty in coping with the real situation (Altuğ-Özsoy, Özkahraman & Çalli, 2006). Parents' responsibilities increase when they have a child with special needs -unexpectedly- and as a result, it brings about emotional, physical and mental exhaustion in parents (Aydoğan & Kızıldağ, 2017). Variables such as parents' lack of knowledge about special education, economic difficulties they experience, tension in marital relationships, changing roles of parents, decrease in participation in social activities, and society's attitude towards mentally disabled individuals increase the stress experienced by families (Bilal & Dağ, 2005; Küçüker, 2001). When the relevant literature is examined, the level of burnout will increase with the increase in stress levels in parents who have children with special needs (Akman, 2006; Duygun & Sezgin, 2003; Elçi, 2004; Ertürk, 2018; Güler & Çapri, 2020; Karacasu, 2019; Nergiz & Uluç, 2018; Tunç & Özkardaş, 2020), on the other hand, it was revealed that stress is a predictor of burnout (Akman, 2006; Elçi, 2004; Güler & Çapri, 2020; Nergiz & Uluç, 2018). There is a great need for family guidance practices for families who have children with special needs (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014).

To prevent the transmission of COVID-19, social distance must be maintained, staying at home and not going out as much as possible have become recommended policies in the world (Saxena & Saxena, 2020). This situation has become a challenging situation for individuals in need of special education and their parents (Dhiman, Sahu, Reed, Ganesh, Goyal & Jain, 2020). Children in need of special education often need individual education in rehabilitation centers and treatment in hospitals and clinics (Mishra & Siddharth, 2018). However, virus prevention measures prevent these children from receiving rehabilitation services and their parents from receiving psychological support. Therefore, it is important for parents to receive online psychological support in this case. Group guidance is a type of service that is carried out at the cognitive level or by offering package programs to many people in order to provide orientation – familiarization with the situation – and informing about professional, educational and social situations (Voltan Acar, 2014). One dimension of the services provided to families who have children with special needs can be considered as psychological counseling and guidance. Services performed in this regard; in addition to family education, it can be listed as providing services that families may need, guiding families towards the services they need, and gaining problem-solving skills related to various problem situations that families may encounter (Özdemir, 2010). In studies for families of children with special needs, studies that will inform families about children and the field and reduce their anxiety about their psychological problems are considered necessary (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014). Developing communication skills, problem solving behaviors and coping with stress, which are carried out depending on the scope of counseling services in special education, will positively affect the functionality of the family and facilitate taking measures against some future difficulties (Özdemir, 2010). In this context, the effect of group guidance program (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014) on family stress and burnout scores of parents of children with special needs can be seen. It will contribute to the few group guidance studies which have examined their effectiveness on burnout in the relevant literature. It is expected that the results obtained from this research will help psychological counselors in developing and arranging the content of group guidance programs to be prepared within the scope of rehabilitation counseling in rehabilitation centers. The general purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the group guidance program applied to parents of children with special needs on their family stress and burnout scores. The independent variable of the research is the group guidance program training which was given to parents of children with special needs. The dependent variable is family stress and burnout scores of parents of children with special needs.

As related to general aim, research questions which are given at the below will be tested.

Hypothesis 1: Do to “family stress levels” pre-test post-test scores differ significantly in favor of the experimental group?

Hypothesis 2: Do to “burnout levels” pre-test post-test scores differ significantly in favor of the experimental group?

METHOD

In this study, the pre-test-post-test control group quasi-experimental model was used. In this model, there are two groups (experimental and control) created by unbiased assignment. Pre-experimental and post-experimental measurements are made under equal conditions for both groups (Büyüköztürk, 2019). Individual interviews were conducted by the researchers with the parents of children in need of special education attending the rehabilitation center, and a problem screening survey was applied to the parents. As a result of surveys and interviews, the priority needs of parents were determined. The design of the study was pre-test-post-test model (2×2) with experimental and control groups, and before starting the research, The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were applied to the trial and control groups as a pre-test. Afterwards, the group guidance program consisting of eight sessions (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014) was applied to the experimental group, while no training was given to the control group. At the end of the group guidance program, The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were applied to the experimental and control groups as a post-test.

FORMING RESEARCH GROUPS

This study was carried out with the parents of students attending a special education and rehabilitation center in Nilüfer, Bursa, affiliated to the National Education Directorate. There are 184 parents of children with special needs in the study group. While selecting parents to participate in the group guidance program training, 19 parents who received high scores from The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were selected among 184. In the preliminary interview with these parents, 4 parents who wanted to participate in the training program were included in the experimental group. Parents close to the mean scores of the experimental group were tried to be selected for the control group. Experimental group consists of 4 parents (mother) and control group consists of 4 parents (mother). The average age of the parents in the experimental group is 39.00 (Standard deviation: 7.483), the average age of the parents in the control group is 35.75 (Standard deviation: 5.188). For both groups, the diagnoses of parents' children were: pervasive developmental disorder, specific learning disability, intellectual disability, and hearing impairment. Children in need of special education are secondary school children and attend the rehabilitation center.

The parents in the experimental and control groups were analyzed to determine whether they were similar in terms of dependent variables (family stress and burnout pre-test scores) with the Mann Whitney U-Test, and the analysis results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Mann Whitney U-Test Results About Family Stress and Burnout Pre-test Scores

Group	Experimental		Control		U	p
	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks		
QRS-F ^a	4.00	16.00	5.00	20.00	6.000	.56
MBI ^b	5.13	20.50	3.88	15.50	5.500	.47

Note. The parents in the experimental and control groups were analyzed to determine whether they were similar in terms of dependent variables (family stress and burnout pre-test scores) with the Mann Whitney U-Test, and the analysis results are shown in Table 1.

^a The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F.

^b The Maslach Burnout Inventory.

When Table 1 is examined; pre-test analysis shows that family stress ($U=6.000$, $p=.56$, $p>.05$) and burnout ($U=5.500$, $p=.47$, $p>.05$) scores did not have any significant difference between groups before starting the experimental application.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F (Friedrich, Greenberg & Crnic, 1983): Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F (QRS-F) which translated to Turkish as "Aile Stresini Değerlendirme Ölçeği", was developed to determine the stress of parents who have children with special needs. The adaptation studies of the scale into Turkish were carried out on 622 parents (mother and father) of children with hearing impairment, mentally disabled, multiple disabilities and normal development. As a result of the factor analysis performed for the scale adaptation, three factors were determined different from the original scale: dysfunction, pessimism, parent and family problems. The reliability of the scale was calculated with KR-20, Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability techniques (Kaner, 2002). As a result of the adaptation to Turkish, the scale consists of 52 items. It was itemized according to a 2-point Likert type (1: True – 0: False). Since nineteen items in the scale consist of positive statements, they are scored as reverse items. For example, one of the reverse items: "_____ can adapt to the social life of our family." (item 10) and one of the non-reverse items: "I am worried about what will happen to _____ when I am unable to look after him/her." (item 4). The scale was collected in 3 sub-dimensions. These are dysfunction, pessimism, and parental and family problems. The total score of the scale is obtained by summing the scores from the sub-dimensions. As the score to be obtained from the scale increases, the family stress levels of the parents also increase. First, permission was obtained via e-mail from the researcher who adapted the scale into Turkish. Afterwards, the scale was applied to the participants in the rehabilitation center and individually.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1997): Three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were examined in the study carried out with mothers who have children with intellectual disability and children with normal development. Adaptation studies of the scale into Turkish were carried out with 118 parents who have children with mental disabilities and 121 parents of normally developing children (Duygun & Sezgin, 2003). The scale consists of 22 items in total. It was itemized according to a 5-point Likert type (0: Never – 1: Very rarely – 2: Sometimes – 3: Often – 4: Always). Since eight items in the scale consist of positive statements, they are scored as reverse items. For example, one of the reverse items: "I find the most appropriate solutions to my child's problems." (item 7) and one of the items not reversed: "It is really tiring for me to deal with my child all day." (item 6). The scale was collected in two sub-dimensions. These are emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. The total score is obtained from the scale with the scores related to the sub-dimensions. As the score to be obtained from the scale increases, the burnout levels of the parents also increase. First, permission was obtained via e-mail from the researchers who adapted the scale to Turkish. Afterwards, the scale was applied to the participants in the rehabilitation center and individually.

PROCEDURE

The scales study of the research was carried out in the second half of the 2020-2021 academic year. The application of the scales was carried out by the researcher himself between the hours when the parents were in the institution. Before the scales were applied, necessary explanations were given to the parents by the researcher. How to fill in the scales was also explained to the parents by the researcher by showing examples on the scales. It was stated by the researcher that the answers given by the parents would not be shared with the administration in any way in accordance with the confidentiality principle and would be kept completely confidential, due to these measures to reach the aim of the study the parents had been asked to answer the questions sincerely as possible. Necessary explanations were given to the parents about the psycho-education to be carried out. At the end of informing, 4 parents in the experimental group stated that they wanted to participate in the psycho-education program. Group guidance was carried out online through the Zoom Meetings program, taking into account the ethical principles of online psychological counseling (Poyrazlı & Can, 2020) due to the COVID-19 process. Group guidance was

applied to the experimental group between 31.05.2021 and 25.07.2021. No application was made to the control group. The group guidance program was developed by Çin (2001) to reduce the anxiety levels of parents who have children with special needs, and it is a group guidance program consisting of 8 sessions in total. The aims of the program are: 1. To help parents who have children with special needs cope with both their educational and psychological problems, 2. To help parents develop their awareness by revealing the emotions, reactions and thoughts they experience when they learn that they have a child with special needs, 3. To raise awareness of mothers and fathers about the acceptance processes they had been through or may experience when they realize that they have a child with special needs, 4. To raise awareness about the '*special education*' field and the institutions and organizations that they can benefit from, 5. To help them gain awareness on sibling relations in families who have children with special needs and society's perception of children with special needs, 6. To increase their awareness of the importance of family support for children with special needs and their needs for family guidance, 7. To enable parents to comprehend and apply the '*compulsory field analysis technique in problem solving*', 8. (Çin & Kılıç, 2014).

DATA ANALYSIS

Before testing the hypotheses, it was examined whether The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F and The Maslach Burnout Inventory scores of the experimental and control groups met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity. It was determined that for both experimental and control groups The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F scores and The Maslach Burnout Inventory scores were not normally distributed. In addition to this, since the number of subjects included in the study was below the critical value of 30 in both the experimental group and the control group, nonparametric analyzes were performed (Alpar, 2000). In this context, groups' which are formed by series of difference scores which obtained from pre-test and post-test score differences of subjects, paired comparisons analyzed by Mann Whitney-U Test (Büyüköztürk, 2007). The data obtained from the experimental and control groups were analyzed with the SPSS Statistics 25 package program and the significance level was taken as $p < .05$.

RESULTS

In line with the purpose of the research, the hypotheses were tested and the findings are presented below. Before moving on to the findings regarding the hypotheses of the study, descriptive statistics regarding family stress and burnout pre-test post-test scores of parents in the experimental and control groups are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Family Stress and Burnout Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Group		Experimental		Control	
		M	SD	M	SD
QRS-F ^a	Pre-test	26.25	7.46	28.00	7.12
	Post-test	20.75	10.05	28.50	6.76
MBI ^b	Pre-test	42.25	11.53	37.25	7.14
	Post-test	33.00	11.23	34.75	7.50

Note. Descriptive statistics regarding family stress and burnout pre-test post-test scores of parents in the experimental and control groups are given in Table 2.

^a The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F.

^b The Maslach Burnout Inventory.

In order to test the research hypotheses, the pre-test scores were subtracted from the post-test scores and their differences were found. To test the significance of difference between control and experimental group Mann Whitney U-Test was applied (Büyüköztürk, 2007). Results of Mann Whitney U-Test have been shown at the Table 3.

Table 3. Mann Whitney U-Test Results of Family Stress and Burnout Pre-test Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Experimental		Control		U	p
	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks		
QRS-F ^a	2.50	10.00	6.50	26.00	.000	.02*
MBI ^b	2.75	11.00	6.25	25.00	1.000	.04*

Note. In order to test the research hypotheses, the pre-test scores were subtracted from the post-test scores and their differences were found. To test the significance of difference between control and experimental group Mann Whitney U-Test was applied. Results of Mann Whitney U-Test have been shown at the Table 3.

^a The Questionnaire on Resource and Stress-F.

^b The Maslach Burnout Inventory.

* $p < .05$.

The first hypothesis of this research is “The pre-test post-test difference scores of family stress levels differ significantly in favor of the experimental group.”. When Table 3 is examined, the results of the analysis show that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($U=.000$, $p=.02$, $p<.05$). Considering the mean rank of the difference scores, it was seen that it was in favor of the experimental group. According to these results, it can be said that the group guidance program applied to the parents in the experimental group was effective in decreasing the family stress levels.

The second hypothesis of this research is “Burnout levels differ significantly in favor of the experimental group in the pre-test post-test difference scores.”. When Table 3 is analyzed, the analysis results show that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($U=1.000$, $p=.04$, $p<.05$). Considering the mean rank of the difference scores, it was seen that it was in favor of the experimental group. According to these results, it can be said that the group guidance program applied to the parents in the experimental group was effective in decreasing the burnout levels.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research was carried out to investigate the effect of group guidance program on family stress and burnout scores of parents who have children with special needs. The findings of the study showed that the group guidance program had a significant effect on family stress and burnout scores of parents who have children with special needs in the experimental group. The implemented group guidance program is aimed at parents of children with special needs and the main purpose of the program is to reduce parents' perceived stress (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014). It is thought that the group guidance program may also be effective on burnout, which may be the result of long-term stress experienced by parents who have children with special needs.

One of the main purpose of the group guidance program to accomplish is to help to cope with experienced stress and burnout parents who have children with special needs (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014). When related literature is examined conducted studies nationally (Adam Karduz & Özbey, 2022; Ardiç & Cavkaytar, 2019; Arıdağ & Erbiçer, 2018; Beşer & İnci, 2014; Çelebi, 2003; Çin & Kılıç, 2014; Dilmaç, Çikılı, Koçak & Çalıkçı, 2009; Kaya & Yöndem, 2020; Özhan, 2001; Özokçu & Canpolat, 2013; Tümlü & Akdoğan, 2019; Tümlü, Akdoğan & Türküm, 2017) and internationally (Abedin & Molaie, 2010; Bagner & Eyberg, 2007; Greaves, 1997; Lee, 2017; Wong, Poon & Kwok, 2011) exists. Adam Karduz & Özbey (2022) carried out group guidance based on the Contextual Positive Psychology approach for mothers of children with moderate to severe mental and physical disabilities. Accordingly, it was concluded that group guidance reduced levels of stress, depression and experiential avoidance and increased subjective well-being levels. Ardiç & Cavkaytar (2019) concluded that the psychoeducation group family training program they carried out reduced the

stress levels of parents. Arıdağ & Erbiçer (2018) reached to this result that the group psychological counseling program they carried out reduced the anxiety levels of mothers who have children with special needs. Beşer & İnci (2014) concluded that the group counseling program they carried out was effective on the anxiety levels of families who have children with intellectual disability. Çelebi (2003) concluded that group counseling and group guidance were effective in the dimensions of addiction and self-management of parents of children with mental disabilities, but not in other dimensions of anxiety. Çin & Kılıç (2014) concluded that the group guidance program they carried out was effective on the trait anxiety and state anxiety levels of mothers and fathers who have children with special needs. Dilmaç et al. (2009) concluded that the group guidance program they carried out was effective on the trait and state anxiety levels of parents who have children with mental disabilities. Kaya & Yondem (2020) concluded that the group guidance program they carried out was effective in reducing the stress levels of mothers of children diagnosed with pervasive development disorder. Özhan (2001) concluded that the individual psychological counseling program based on the Gestalt approach was effective on the trait anxiety levels of mothers who have children with mental disabilities. Özokçu & Canpolat (2013) concluded that the group guidance program they carried out was effective on the stress levels of mothers of children with intellectual disabilities. Tümlü & Akdoğan (2019) concluded that group counseling was effective on the anxiety dimension of psychological symptoms of mothers who have children with special needs. Tümlü et al. (2017) concluded that the group counseling program based on reality therapy was effective on the state anxiety, but not on trait anxiety of parents who have children with special needs. Abedin & Molaie (2010) concluded that the group counseling program was effective on the parental stress levels of mothers of children with mild intellectual disability. Bagner & Eyberg (2007) concluded that the individual counseling program they carried out was effective on the parental stress levels of the parents of students with intellectual disability and oppositional defiant disorder. Greaves (1997) concluded that the psychoeducation program he carried out was effective on the parental stress levels of mothers who have children with Down syndrome. Lee (2017) concluded that the psychoeducation process he carried out was effective on parental stress and perceived stress levels of mothers of disabled individuals. Wong et al. (2011) concluded that the psychoeducation program they carried out was effective on the parental stress levels of the parents of children with mental disabilities. The results of group guidance, group counseling and individual counseling programs developed in the related literature on coping with stress have a significant effect on the stress levels of the experimental groups support the findings of this research. The fact that mothers realize that the stress they experience is due to their children's disability and that they are supported to share their feelings in the group helps them understand the importance of family support, solve stress-related problems, and learn to cope with stress. Accordingly, these results have been achieved.

In this study, the effect of the group guidance program on the burnout of parents with children with special needs was examined. In the related literature, results of studies conducted with mothers (Bilgin & Gözüm, 2009; Güler & Çapri, 2019) and fathers (Güler, 2021) of disabled individuals have supported this study. Accordingly, in the studies conducted by Güler & Çapri (2019) and Güler (2021), it was determined that group guidance programs were effective on parental spouse burnout. In the study conducted by Bilgin & Gözüm (2009), it was determined that the group guidance program was effective on the burnout levels of parents. With these studies, it can be said that parents may experience burnout as a result of the stress they experience on the development of their children, and the risk of experiencing burnout will decrease if parents are helped to cope with stress.

When the results of the research were evaluated in general, it was concluded that the group guidance program was significantly effective on the family stress and burnout levels of the parents of children with special needs. Accordingly, it is necessary for parents to be aware of their feelings, thoughts and reactions when they have a child with special needs, to be aware of the process of accepting the child with special needs, and to increase their knowledge about special education. In

addition to this, it is important for parents to be aware of the importance of family support and family guidance in the education of children with special needs. Doğan & Görgü (2022) conducted a study on parents of children with autism spectrum disorder during the COVID-19 period. Accordingly, the area where the COVID-19 process affects parents most negatively is behavioral problems. According to the results of a study, the areas with the most problems during the COVID-19 process are education and health (Aydemir, 2022). Families with children with special needs need psychological counseling and group guidance services (Özdemir, 2010). Considering the results of the research, the importance of the group guidance program (Çin, 2001; Çin & Kılıç, 2014) to be carried out by psychological counselors working in the field of rehabilitation counseling is revealed.

The psychoeducation program which applied in this study had been carried out with the mothers of children with different diagnoses. In future studies, it is recommended to implement a group guidance program by forming counseling groups among the parents according to the diagnoses of the children. The psychoeducation program which had been applied in this study carried out with mothers only. In future studies, the effect of psychoeducation program on stress and burnout can be examined in more heterogeneous groups by including fathers. The psychoeducational intervention process of this research was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic period. For further studies to be carried out, after the COVID-19 pandemic process is over, the effectiveness of the psychoeducation intervention program can be re-evaluated by performing a needs analysis beforehand in order to identify new problems experienced by children with special needs in adapting to a new process for their parents.

The limitations of this study are that only mothers were included in the experimental and control groups and the number of parents in the groups was low. Due to Covid-19 global pandemic circumstances psychoeducation program had to be held online. In this context, the findings obtained from this research can be generalized to study groups that have similar characteristics and had been carried online. At the same time some of the group sessions exceeded planned session time due to prolonged group exercises Exceeded session period might have influenced emotional status of the participants.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Second author has made substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data. The first author have been involved in drafting the manuscript and revising it critically for important intellectual content.

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