



**The Effects of the Group Guidance Program on the Couple Burnout, Occupational Burnout and Work Engagement Levels of Fathers with Children with a Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders\***

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Keywords**

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**Purpose:** The present study aims to examine to what extent the group guidance program affects the levels of couple burnout, occupational burnout and work engagement of fathers with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). **Research Methods:** In this research, a random pattern with a pre-test post-test control group in a quasi-experimental design was used. The research group of this study consisted of 22 fathers whose children attended the Education Foundation in a provincial center in Central Anatolia and volunteered to participate in the group work. With the random assignment method, 11 fathers were assigned to the experimental group and 11 fathers to the control group. The Couple Burnout Measure-Short Version

(CBMS), the Burnout Measure-Short Version (BMS), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Personal Information Form designed by the researcher were used as the data collection tools in this study. A group guidance program of 10 sessions, once a week for ten weeks, was applied to the experimental group. Shapiro-Wilk test was used in data analysis, and the Levene test was used to test the homogeneity of variances. The pre-test and post-test scores of the fathers in the experimental and control groups were compared with the t-test for dependent and independent groups. **Findings:** As a result of the analysis of the data, there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test mean scores of both couple burnout and occupational burnout, while there was no significant difference between work engagement post-test and pre-test mean scores. **Implications for Research and Practice:** Since it has been determined that the group guidance program is effective in reducing couple and occupational burnout scores of fathers with children with ASD, this program may be useful to be implemented by psychological counselors. In addition, group psychological counseling activities using psychological intervention strategies for parents can be conducted.

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## Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), whose prevalence has increased worldwide in recent years, is a lifelong developmental disorder characterized by social interaction and communication limitations and disorders, stereotypical behavior patterns, typically occurring in early childhood (APA, 2013). Many characteristics of children and adolescents diagnosed with ASD may negatively affect parents psychologically. Especially some problematic behaviors, difficulty in acting socially in normative ways and self-control problems are some of these characteristics. In addition, children diagnosed with ASD generally avoid social situations and have limitations in contacting (APA, 2013).

The participation of a child diagnosed with ASD in the family may cause the parents to experience different emotions and learn new roles and skills by affecting the lifestyle and quality of life as well as physical and mental problems (Benson & Karlof, 2009; Leung & Li-Tsang, 2003). Behavioral problems of children diagnosed with ASD may cause parents to spend more time and energy and experience intense stress (Brobst, Clopton & Hendrick, 2009). These stress factors may cause parents to experience more health problems (Fairthorne, de Klerk & Leonard, 2015), as well as emotions, such as anger, depression, and anxiety (Benson & Karlof, 2009). In addition to these, the stress experienced may negatively affect the relationships of the spouses (Bluth, Roberson, Billen & Sams, 2013; Meadan, Halle & Ebata, 2010). Relationship satisfaction of parents with children diagnosed with ASD is lower than the parents of normally developing children (Brobst et al., 2009) and the divorce rate is higher (Hartley et al., 2010). Given the high divorce rate between spouses in families with children diagnosed with ASD (Hartley et al., 2010), it can be said that the presence of a child with ASD in the family causes problems in marital relationships. According to Risdal and Singer (2004), mothers and fathers with children diagnosed with ASD have lower marital satisfaction than mothers and fathers who do not have a disabled child. In conclusion, having a child diagnosed with ASD increases the possibility of parents experiencing divorce and lower marital satisfaction.

Both mothers and fathers of children diagnosed with ASD experience higher levels of parental stress and psychological distress than the mothers and fathers of normally developing children (Davis & Carter, 2008). When fathers learn that their children are diagnosed with ASD, they generally experience feelings of anger, fear, denial and loneliness. Also, they may have lower self-esteem and a more depressive mood (Roll-Pettersson, 2001; Trute, Hiebert-Murphy & Levine, 2007). In addition, fathers may feel skeptical and unsuccessful about their obligations to take care of their children and to be "good fathers". In general, being the father of a disabled child brings challenges and pressures to additional responsibilities to current father roles (Ahmad & Dardas, 2015).

The addition of a child diagnosed with ASD to the family often increases the responsibility of fathers, who support the family, to need more time, money and energy. This situation causes fathers to experience intense anxiety and stress (Navalkar, 2010). Within the family, fathers experience higher levels of stress than mothers (Rivard, Terroux, Parent-Boursier & Mercier, 2014) It has been stated that the

stress and depression experienced by fathers are also associated with burnout (Plieger, Melchers, Montag, Meermann & Reuter, 2015). As a result of the stress and anxiety experienced, couple burnout and occupational burnout may occur.

Couple burnout, first proposed by Pines (1996), is physical, mental, and emotional fatigue that occurs as a result of the intensification of emotional demands in a long-term relationship and caused by the difference between expectations and reality. Burnout is seen as a result of the frazzle caused by the difference between expectations and facts. A general state of unhappiness and malaise prevails in the relationship, and when the relationship is about to end, couple burnout is intensely observed. Giving yourself to work and marriage or getting away from them is experienced differently for men and women. Traditionally, while women try to realize the meaning of life through their relationships, men try to do this with their jobs (Pines, 1996). Fathers whose children diagnosed with ASD may have a sense of occupational burnout as well as couple burnout.

Individuals sometimes start their work with great enthusiasm and excitement, and over time, they get tired physically, emotionally and mentally and experience occupational burnout (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Occupational burnout, which is a concept related to business life, also may affect other areas of an individual's life, such as marriage, family and social life (Lingard, 2004). Williams (2007) states that the relationship between the profession and marital life is very tight and negativity in one may affect the other. In a study conducted by Danner-Vlaardingerbroek, Kluwer, van Steenberg and Lippe (2012), a positive relationship was found between couple burnout and occupational burnout. When occupational burnout increases, couple burnout also increases.

While burnout harms employees' personal and social adaptation, it may affect their attitudes towards their jobs and reduces their work engagement. Work engagement is defined as a positive, satisfying and emotional motivation towards work, which is shaped by the dimensions of desire to work, devotion to work, and focus on work. Burnout and work engagement that may affect the performance of employees are independent structures, and there is a negative relationship between them (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002). The burden of having a disabled child brings additional duties and responsibilities for fathers. The long-term stress experienced by fathers due to this additional duty and responsibility may negatively affect their feelings about work and their work engagements.

Some support is provided to mothers and fathers with a child diagnosed with ASD. Some of these supports can be listed as educational support, marriage and family counseling, individual or group intervention programs, and guidance services (Perry, 2004). Group guidance practices offered within the scope of guidance services are practices where participants are taught new knowledge and skills in dealing with a crisis or developmental issues or in preventing problems (Brown, 2013). Assistance provided through group guidance or individual guidance can increase the ability of parents to meet the needs of their children and reduce their anxiety and feelings of guilt (Cavkaytar, Ardiç, Ozbey, Sonmez, Ozdemir & Aksoy, 2012).

In the literature, the intervention studies for the burnout of parents with disabled children are mostly conducted on mothers (Bilgin & Gozum, 2009; Guler & Capri, 2018) and are effective in reducing mothers' burnout. As a result of the study conducted by Guler and Capri (2018) to investigate whether the group guidance program affects the occupational burnout, work engagement, and couple burnout levels of working mothers with disabled children, the findings suggested that the group guidance program was effective in reducing the couple and occupational burnout scores of working mothers with disabled children. Until recently, fathers were not sufficiently included in studies on parents of children with ASD (Braunstein, Peniston, Perelman & Cassano, 2013).

Differences are observed in terms of coping and support strategies of mothers and fathers (Pozo, Sarriá & Brioso, 2014). Fathers use active avoidance, including self-blame, distraction, and denial, more than mothers (Pozo et al., 2014). In addition, fathers generally have less social support than mothers (Brobst et al., 2009). According to Papageorgiou and Kalyva (2010), fathers receive less social support from friends in the workplace than mothers. It has been suggested that fathers' deficiencies in expressing their feelings may lead to a decrease in the social support they receive from their friends at work. As burnout increases, the need for social support increases. Effective social support helps both mothers and fathers to help reduce burnout and find ways to cope better (Aburabia-Queder, 2011; Pottie & Ingram, 2008). Therefore, interventions are needed to reduce the burnout experienced by fathers with disabled children.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are intervention studies designed in an experimental design for parents with disabled children in Turkey and abroad (Cin, 2001; Yucel & Cavkaytar, 2007; Zingale, Belfiore, Mongelli, Trubia & Buono, 2008), and the studies are mostly conducted with mothers (Alaedein & Al-Sharaa, 2020; Kaya & Yondem, 2020; Kulbas, 2015; Ozokcu & Canpolat, 2013). Experimental studies involving fathers who have children with ASD seem to be quite limited both in Turkey and abroad. In addition, to our knowledge, there is no experimental study in the literature that conduct in Turkey and examining the effects of group guidance program on the levels of couple burnout, occupational burnout and work engagement of fathers who have children with ASD. Therefore, group guidance programs are needed to reduce the burnout levels of fathers with children with ASD. In this context, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature. The results to be obtained from this study may help to develop guidance and psychological counseling services for fathers with children with ASD. In addition, the fathers participating in the program will be able to adapt more to family and work-life with the gains they have achieved and improve their relationships in family and work life, and their couple and occupational burnout levels will decrease, and work engagement will increase.

In line with the explanations made so far, this study aims to examine to what extent the group guidance program affects the levels of couple burnout, occupational burnout, and work engagement of fathers with children with ASD. In line with this general purpose, is the group guidance program effective on the couple burnout,

occupational burnout and work engagement levels of fathers who have a child diagnosed with ASD? The answer to this question was sought.

## Method

### *Research Design*

This research was a quasi-experimental study using the design with a pre-test, post-test and control group. In this research design, participants were randomly assigned to two or more intervention conditions, and a pre-test was applied. After the intervention, a post-test was applied. Owing to the unbiased assignment, this pattern was strong concerning internal validity (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015).

### *Research Sample*

The research group of this study consisted of 22 fathers whose children attended the Education Foundation in a provincial center in Central Anatolia and volunteer to participate in the group work. Eighteen (81.81%) of the fathers who accepted to participate in this study were university graduates, and four (18.18) were high school graduates. When the fathers in the study group were evaluated concerning the age variable, there were two (9.09%) fathers in the 20-30 age group, 12 (54.54%) in the 31-40 age group, and eight (36.36%) in the 41-50 age group. According to the duration of marriage variable, six (27.27%) of the fathers was married for 1-5 years, eight (36.60%) of them was married for 6-10 years, four (18.18%) of them was married for 11-15 years, and four (18.18%) of them was married for 16-20 years.

To conduct this research, written permission was obtained from the management of Education which provides special education services. The informed consent form prepared for their voluntary participation in this study was signed by the fathers whose children were diagnosed with ASD.

### *Research Instruments and Procedures*

*Couple burnout Measure Short Version (CBMS)*. The couple burnout scale (SBS-SF), developed by Pines, Neal, Hammer, and Icekson (2011), was answered based on the statements of the interviewees with seven degrees (1 Never and 7 Always) to measure the burnout level of marriage and relationship-related burnout of people in all types of relationships defined as married or couple. The internal consistency coefficients of the scale calculated from the data obtained from married individuals were .94 for married women and .95 for married men. The Turkish adaptation validity and reliability study of the scale were conducted by Capri (2013). The test-retest reliability coefficient performed by Capri (2013) every four weeks was reported as .90, and the internal consistency reliability coefficient was .91.

*Burnout Measure -Short Version (BMS)*. The Turkish adaptation validity and reliability study of the Burnout Scale Short Form (BS-SF) developed by Pines (2005) was conducted by Capri (2013). The test and re-test reliability coefficient of the test performed by Capri (2013) with an interval of four weeks was reported as .88 and the

internal consistency reliability coefficient was .91. The internal consistency coefficients of the scale calculated with the data obtained from the different ethnic origin, profession, and student groups were observed to vary between .85 and .92.

*Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).* Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker in 2002. The Turkish adaptation validity and reliability study were performed by Gunduz, Capri and Gokcakan (2013), and the 5-point Likert scale (never, sometimes, usually, often, always) format was adopted in the adaptation study of the scale. It was determined that the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the sub-factors of the scale ranged from .77 to .82, item-total test correlations ranged from .46 to .68, and the test-retest correlation coefficient obtained at four-week intervals ranged from .72 to .84.

*Personal Information Form.* This form, which was developed by the researcher, contained information about the child's age, profession, education level and marriage duration variables of the fathers.

To conduct this research, written permission was obtained from the management of Education Foundation, which provides special education services. The informed consent form prepared for their voluntary participation in this study was signed by the fathers whose children diagnosed with ASD. In the selection of the fathers in the study group, having a child diagnosed with ASD between the ages of 3-18 and having a job were determined as criteria. As a result of the screening studies, 22 fathers were randomly assigned to groups. Eleven fathers were assigned to the experimental group and 11 to the control group. The sessions held between 30 April-2 July 2019 lasted approximately 90 minutes for each session. A group guidance program was applied to the fathers in the experimental group for 10 weeks, one session every week. No action was taken for the fathers in the control group.

In this study, a group guidance program prepared by Guler and Capri (2018) to reduce the couple and occupational burnout levels of working mothers with disabled children and to increase the level of work engagement was applied to the fathers in the experimental group. In the group guidance program, some arrangements were made in line with expert opinions, as the participants consisted of fathers with a child diagnosed with ASD. In the program, the issue of having a child diagnosed with ASD was discussed instead of having a disabled child. Additionally, expressing emotions and social support were included more in the program.

The goals aimed to be brought to the fathers in the group are as follows, in the order of the session:

In the first session, being able to meet fathers and help them feel comfortable in a group environment.

In the second session, learning the characteristics of ASD, understanding the importance of family support and family guidance.

In the third session, the ability to make fathers aware of the problems they experience and their effects. To be able to make fathers express their thoughts about the child with ASD.

In the fourth session, to be able to comprehend the processes experienced by fathers who have children with ASD. To be able to make fathers identify the process they are in.

In the fifth session, being able to learn stress, the causes of stress, and reactions to stress; to be able to realize the sources of stress in business life.

In the sixth session, to ensure that fathers have information about the relationships between emotions, thoughts and behavior (ABC model).

In the seventh session, helping fathers learn the effects of their thoughts and beliefs about their children on their lives; to make fathers aware of their social support systems.

In the eighth session, being able to realize the effect of having a child with ASD on communication with the spouse; to be able to recognize relationships and conflicts with the spouse.

In the ninth session, making fathers realize their self-worth, the ability to help increase fathers' self-worth.

Finally, in the tenth session, to make fathers be able to evaluate the whole process. To be able to share what the program has brought to fathers.

During the implementation of the group guidance program, activities were carried out in line with the purposes of the sessions, and homework was given to fathers.

#### *Data Analysis*

In the analysis of the data, the Shapiro-Wilk Test was used to investigate whether the data were normally distributed and the Levene test to test the homogeneity of the variances. As a result of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test applied to the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, it was observed that the p-value was insignificant ( $p > .05$ ), and the variances were homogeneous as a result of the Levene test applied to test the homogeneity of the variances ( $p > .05$ ). The t-test was used for independent groups to investigate whether there was a difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the fathers in the experimental and control groups. The pre-test total scores and post-test total scores of the fathers in the experimental group were compared with the t-test for dependent groups. The data of the research were analyzed using the SPSS 16th package program.

### **Results**

To investigate whether fathers with children diagnosed with ASD in the experimental and control groups were equivalent to each other in terms of couple

burnout, occupational burnout, and work engagement scores, a t-test was applied to independent groups. Table 1 shows the analyses for these tests.

**Table 1**

*T-Test Results Applied to the Total Scores of Couple Burnout/Occupational Burnout/Work Engagement Pre-test of Fathers with Children with ASD in the Experimental and Control Groups*

	Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Couple burnout	Experimental Group	11	2.62	1.03	.16	.72
	Control Group	11	2.55	1.04		
Occupational Burnout	Experimental Group	11	2.59	.72	.05	.95
	Control Group	11	2.57	.76		
Work Engagement	Experimental Group	11	54.36	11.60	-.05	.95
	Control Group	11	54.63	10.48		

According to Table 1, there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups as a result of the t-test conducted to investigate whether there was a difference between the pre-test scores of the fathers with children with ASD in the experimental and control groups. (Couple Burnout:  $t=.16$ ;  $p>0.05$ . Occupational Burnout:  $t=.05$ ;  $p>.05$ . Work Engagement:  $t= -.05$ ;  $p>.05$ ).

The t-test results for dependent groups applied to the total scores of the pre-test and post-test for couple burnout/occupational burnout/work engagement of fathers with children with ASD in the experimental group are represented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*T-Test Results of the Total Scores of Couple Burnout/Occupational Burnout/Work Engagement Pre-test/Post-test of Fathers with Children with ASD in the Experimental Group*

	Test	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Couple Burnout	Pre-test	11	2.62	1.03	2.37	.03
	Post-test	11	1.87	.63		
Occupational Burnout	Pre-test	11	2.59	.72	3.51	.00
	Post-test	11	1.89	.74		
Work Engagement	Pre-test	11	54.36	11.60	-.20	.84
	Post-test	11	55.27	11.96		

As shown in Table 2, the couple burnout pre-test mean score of the fathers with a child diagnosed with ASD in the experimental group was  $\bar{X}=2.62$ , and their couple burnout post-test mean score was  $\bar{X}=1.87$ . The post-test mean score of the fathers in the experimental group were significantly lower than the pre-test mean score ( $t = 2.37$ ;  $p <.05$ ).



The occupational burnout pre-test mean scores of the fathers with children with ASD diagnosis in the experimental group was  $\bar{X}=2.59$ , the occupational burnout post-test mean score was  $\bar{X}=1.89$ . The post-test mean score of the fathers in the experimental group was significantly lower than the pre-test mean score ( $t=3.51$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

Work engagement pre-test mean score of the fathers with children diagnosed with ASD in the experimental group was  $\bar{X}=54.36$ , work engagement post-test mean score was  $\bar{X}=55.27$ . The difference between the post-test mean scores and pre-test mean scores of the fathers in the experimental group was not significant ( $t = -.20$ ;  $p> .05$ ).

The results of the t-test for independent groups related to couple burnout/occupational burnout/work engagement post-test score of fathers with children with ASD in the experimental group and the control group are represented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*T-Test Results of the Couple Burnout/Occupational Burnout/Work Engagement Post-test Scores of Fathers with Children with ASD in the Experimental and Control Groups*

	Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Couple burnout	Experimental Group	11	1.87	.63	-2.19	.04
	Control Group	11	2.66	1.01		
Occupational Burnout	Experimental Group	11	1.89	.74	-2.23	.03
	Control Group	11	2.70	.95		
Work Engagement	Experimental Group	11	55.27	11.96	-.03	.97
	Control Group	11	55.45	10.88		

As can be seen in Table 3, the couple burnout post-test mean scores of fathers, with a child diagnosed with ASD, in the experimental group was  $\bar{X}=1.87$ , and the post-test mean scores of fathers in the control group was  $\bar{X}=2.66$ . The post-test mean scores of the fathers in the experimental group were significantly lower than the post-test mean scores of the fathers in the control group ( $t = -2.19$ ;  $p <.05$ ).

The occupational burnout post-test mean scores of fathers, with a child diagnosed with ASD, in the experimental group was  $\bar{X}=1.89$ , and the post-test mean scores of fathers in the control group was  $\bar{X}=2.70$ . The post-test mean scores of the fathers in the experimental group were significantly lower than the post-test mean scores of the fathers in the control group ( $t=-2.23$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

The work engagement post-test mean scores of fathers, with a child diagnosed with ASD, in the experimental group was  $\bar{X}=55.27$ , and the post-test mean scores of fathers in the control group was  $\bar{X}=55.45$ . The difference between the post-test mean scores of

the fathers in the experimental group and the post-test mean scores of the fathers in the control group was statistically not significant. ( $t = -.03; p > .05$ ).

T-test results of the couple burnout/occupational burnout/work engagement pre-test and post-test mean scores of fathers with children with ASD diagnosis in the control group are represented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*T-Test Results of the Couple Burnout/Occupational Burnout/Work Engagement Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores of Fathers with Children with ASD Diagnosis in the Control Group*

	Test	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Couple burnout	Pre-test	11	2.55	1.04	1.70	.11
	Post-test	11	2.66	1.01		
Occupational Burnout	Pre-test	11	2.57	.76	-.72	.48
	Post-test	11	2.70	.95		
Work Engagement	Pre-test	11	54.63	10.48	-2.04	.07
	Post-test	11	55.45	10.88		

As can be seen in Table 4, the couple burnout pre-test mean scores of the fathers with a child diagnosed with ASD in the control group were  $\bar{X}=2.55$ , their couple burnout post-test mean score was  $\bar{X}=2.66$ . There was no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the fathers in the control group and the pre-test mean scores ( $t = 1.70; p > .05$ ).

The occupational burnout pre-test mean scores of the fathers with children with ASD diagnosis in the control group were  $\bar{X}=2.57$ , the occupational burnout post-test mean score was  $\bar{X}=2.70$ . There was no significant difference between the fathers' occupational pre-test mean scores and post-test mean scores ( $t = .72; p > .05$ ).

The work engagement pre-test mean scores of the fathers with children with ASD diagnosis in the control group were  $\bar{X}=54.63$ , the work engagement post-test mean score was  $\bar{X}=55.45$ . The difference between the post-test and pre-test mean scores was not significant ( $t = -2.04; p > .05$ ).

### Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study conducted on fathers with children diagnosed with ASD, it was aimed to evaluate the effects of the 10-week group guidance program on couple burnout, occupational burnout, and work engagement, and for this purpose, the pre-test-post-test scores obtained from the scales applied to the fathers were compared with the t-test. There was a significant difference between the couple burnout and occupational burnout pre-test mean scores and post-test mean scores of the fathers in the experimental group, and there was no significant difference between the work engagement pre-test scores and post-test average scores. Based on this finding, it can be said that the applied group guidance program is effective in reducing the couple

and occupational burnout levels of fathers with children with ASD. Since there are no experimental studies on couple burnout, occupational burnout, and work engagement of fathers with children diagnosed with ASD, the results of this study were evaluated together with the results of other studies on the subject.

In the literature, intervention studies for the burnout of mothers with disabled children appear to be effective (Bilgin & Gozum, 2009; Guler & Capri, 2018). As a result of the research conducted by Guler and Capri (2008) to reduce couple burnout and occupational burnout of working mothers with disabled children, it was determined that the applied group guidance program was effective in reducing the couple and occupational burnout scores of working mothers with disabled children. In this study, the group guidance program applied was effective in reducing the couple and occupational burnout scores of fathers with children with ASD. This result is consistent with the results of the studies in the literature that the interventions made on mothers with disabled children are effective.

Parents with disabled children need information about the cause of their children's disability and what to do about this disability (Sucuoglu, 2001). ). Parents of children with ASD may have a lack of knowledge about ASD. The information given to parents helps them to develop a sense of competence and to cope with problems. Increasing the knowledge of the parents enables them to face challenges and learn real information about their child (Ilias, Cornish, Park, Toran & Golden, 2019). The results of the previous research revealed that group guidance practices applied to parents with disabled children helped their children to learn more about their disability and reduce their negative psychological symptoms and burnout levels (Gammon & Rose, 1991; Guler & Capri, 2018; Ozokcu & Canpolat, 2013). It can be said that informing the fathers in the experimental group about ASD reduced the negative feelings and was effective in reducing couple and occupational burnout scores.

Group guidance practices are practices where participants learn new knowledge and skills to deal with a crisis or developmental issues or to prevent problems (Brown, 2013). Receiving guidance assistance is an important predictor of the stress levels of parents with disabled children. In addition, it is stated that there is a positive relationship between stress and burnout (Kennedy, 2005). According to the results of the research conducted with mothers with disabled children, it was determined that the stress levels of the mothers participating in the education decreased and their communication and problem-solving skills increased (Bicak, 2009; Gammon & Rose, 1991). This study had determined that the couple and occupational burnout levels of fathers participating in the group guidance program decreased. The new information learned by fathers who participated in group guidance programs and the cognitive skills they acquired to reduce stress may have been effective in reducing fathers' stress levels. The knowledge they gained during the group sessions about the effects of the disabled child on the marital relationship and professional life, communication with the spouse, and the new cognitive skills they acquired may be effective in the decrease in couple burnout and occupational burnout post-test scores in the experimental group of the fathers who have a child diagnosed with ASD.

It can be said that one of the factors affecting the decrease in couple and occupational burnout post-test scores of fathers in the experimental group is the healing effect of the group. During the group sessions, it is a comforting, reassuring, and healing experience for fathers with children diagnosed with ASD to realize that the problems are not unique and that they are not alone. According to Yalom (1992), group support and acceptance by the group are important in ensuring change. Group members express their feelings more when they see that other members have similar problems. In this study, the low number of participants in the experimental group may have increased the healing effect of the group by enabling fathers with children with ASD to express their feelings more.

Burnout and work engagement that may affect the performance of employees are independent structures, and there is a negative relationship between them (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002). As a result of the group guidance program implemented in this study, a significant difference was obtained between the occupational burnout pre-test and post-test scores of fathers with children with ASD. There was no significant difference between work engagement pre-test and post-test scores of fathers in the experimental group. This situation is thought to be because the issue of work engagement cannot be adequately addressed due to the low number of sessions.

The limitations in this study are that the sample size is small, and the sample is limited to fathers who have children with ASD who are educated in a special education foundation. It is thought that it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study on different samples by increasing the sample size.

The following recommendations can be made in line with the results of this research:

This program, which is determined to be effective in reducing the couple and occupational burnout scores of fathers with children with ASD, should be applied by psychological counselors to fathers with similar characteristics. In addition, it is thought that it would be beneficial to apply this program to parents with children diagnosed with ASD within the scope of guidance and psychological counseling services in schools and institutions that provide education for children with disabilities.

Intervention studies are needed to reduce couple and occupational burnout of fathers with children with ASD. Group guidance, individual and group counseling, and psychoeducation studies can be conducted on expressing emotions, stress and social support, which are thought to be related to couple and occupational burnout of fathers with children with ASD. Programs that include psychological variables, such as life satisfaction, marital adjustment, stress, anxiety, self-efficacy, as well as couple and occupational burnout can be prepared for fathers with children with ASD.

In addition to programs applied to fathers with children with ASD diagnosis, new programs can be prepared for mothers. With the new programs to be prepared, group

guidance practices can be carried out in which mothers and fathers with children with ASD participate together.

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## Grup Rehberliği Programının Otizm Spektrum Bozukluğu Tanılı Çocuğa Sahip Babaların Eş Tükenmişliği, Mesleki Tükenmişlik ve İşle Bütünleşme Düzeyine Etkisi

### Atıf:

Güler, M. (2021). The effects of the group guidance program on the couple burnout, occupational burnout and work engagement levels of fathers with children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 92, 359-376, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2021.92.18

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* Son yıllarda tüm Dünya’da görülme sıklığında artış görülen otizm spektrum bozukluğu (OSB), tipik olarak erken çocukluk döneminde ortaya çıkan, sosyal etkileşim ve iletişim sınırlılık ve bozukluklar, stereotipik davranış kalıpları ile karakterize ve yaşam boyu süren bir gelişimsel bozukluktur. OSB tanılı çocuk ve ergenlerin birçok özelliği ebeveynleri ruhsal yönden olumsuz etkilemektedir. Babalar çocuklarının OSB tanısını aldıklarını öğrendiklerinde genel olarak kızgınlık, öfke, korku, inkar, yalnızlık gibi duygular yaşamaktadır. Ayrıca daha düşük benlik saygısına sahip olmakta ve daha depresif bir duygu durumuna sahip olabilmektedirler. Bunlara ek olarak, babalar çocuklarına bakma ve “iyi baba” olma yükümlülüklerini yerine getirme konusunda şüpheye düşmekte ve kendilerini başarısız hissedebilmektedirler. OSB tanılı çocuğun aileye katılmasıyla çoğunlukla ailenin geçimini sağlayan babaların daha fazla zaman, para ve enerjiye gereksinim duymaları, üzerindeki sorumluluğu artırmaktadır. Bu durum babaların yoğun kaygı ve stres yaşamalarına neden olmaktadır. Aile içerisinde babalar annelere göre daha yüksek düzeyde stres yaşamaktadırlar. Babaların yaşadığı stres ve depresyon tükenmişlik ile ilişkilidir. Yaşanan stres ve kaygının bir sonucu olarak eş tükenmişliği ve mesleki tükenmişlik oluşabilmektedir. Grup rehberliği veya bireysel rehberlik yoluyla sağlanan yardımlar, anne babaların çocuklarının gereksinimlerini karşılama yeteneğini arttırarak, endişelerinin ve suçluluk duygularının azalmasını sağlayabilmektedir. Türkiye’de OSB tanılı çocuğa sahip babaların tükenmişlik düzeylerini azaltmaya yönelik grup rehberliği programlarına ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Buradan hareketle bu çalışma Türkiye’de bu konuda ilk araştırma olması bakımından önem arz etmektedir. Bu araştırmadan elde edilecek sonuçların, OSB tanılı çocuğa sahip babalara yönelik sunulacak rehberlik ve psikolojik danışma hizmetlerinin geliştirilmesine yardımcı olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Buna ek olarak programa katılan babaların elde ettikleri kazanımlarla aile ve çalışma hayatında daha fazla uyum sağlayabilecekleri aile ve iş yaşamındaki ilişkileri geliştirebilecekleri eş ve mesleki tükenmişlik düzeylerinin azalacağı ve işle bütünleşmelerin arttıracağı düşünülmektedir. Buraya kadar yapılan açıklamalar doğrultusunda bu araştırmanın amacı, grup rehberliği programının OSB tanılı çocuğa sahip babaların eş tükenmişliği, mesleki tükenmişlik ve işle bütünleşme düzeylerini ne ölçüde etkilediğini incelemektir.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu araştırmada yarı deneysel desende öntest sontest kontrol gruplu seçkisiz desen kullanılmıştır. Araştırma grubu, OSB tanılı çocuğu olan ve

araştırmaya katılmaya gönüllü 22 babadan oluşmaktadır. Seçkisiz atama yöntemi ile 11 baba deney grubuna, 11 baba ise kontrol grubuna atanmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak, Eş Tükenmişlik Ölçeği-Kısa Formu (ETÖ-KF), Tükenmişlik Ölçeği-Kısa Formu (TÖ-KF), Utrechth İşle Bütünleşme Ölçeği (UIBÖ) ve araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulan Kişisel Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Deney grubuna 10 hafta boyunca grup rehberliği programı uygulanmıştır.

*Verilerin Analizi:* Verilerin analizinde, Shapiro-Wilk testinden ve varyansların homojenliğini test etmek için Levene testinden yararlanılmıştır. Deney ve kontrol grubunda yer alan babaların öntest puanları ve sontest puanları bağımlı ve bağımsız gruplar t testi ile karşılaştırılmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* OSB tanılu çocuğa sahip babalar üzerinde yapılan bu çalışmada 10 haftalık grup rehberliği programının eş tükenmişliği, mesleki tükenmişlik ve işle bütünleşme üzerindeki etkisinin değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır ve bu amaçla babalara uygulanan ölçeklerden elde edilen öntest sontest puanları t testi ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Deney grubunda yer alan babaların eş ve mesleki tükenmişlik sontest puan ortalamaları kontrol grubunda yer alan babaların eş ve mesleki tükenmişlik sontest puan ortalamalarından anlamlı düzeyde düşük bulunmuştur (Eş Tükenmişliği:  $t=-2.19$ ;  $p<.05$ . Mesleki Tükenmişlik:  $t=-2.23$ ;  $p<.05$ ). İşle bütünleşme değişkeni açısından, deney grubunda yer alan babaların sontest puan ortalamaları ile kontrol grubunda yer alan babaların sontest puan ortalamaları arasındaki farklılık istatistiksel olarak anlamlı değildir ( $t=-.03$ ;  $p>.05$ ). Deney grubu öntest ve sontest puan ortalamaları karşılaştırıldığında; Deney grubunda yer alan babaların eş ve mesleki tükenmişlik sontest puan ortalamaları, eş ve mesleki tükenmişlik öntest toplam puan ortalamalarından anlamlı düzeyde düşük bulunmuştur (Eş Tükenmişliği:  $t=2.37$ ;  $p<.05$ . Mesleki Tükenmişlik:  $t=3.51$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Deney grubunda yer alan babaların işle bütünleşme sontest puan ortalamaları ile ön test puan ortalamaları arasında gözlenen farklılık anlamlı değildir ( $t=-.20$ ;  $p>.05$ ).

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler:* OSB tanılu çocuğa sahip babalar üzerinde yapılan bu çalışmada 10 haftalık grup rehberliği programının eş tükenmişliği, mesleki tükenmişlik ve işle bütünleşme üzerindeki etkisinin değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Deney grubunda yer alan babaların eş tükenmişliği öntest puanları ve mesleki tükenmişlik öntest puanlarına ile sontestten aldıkları ortalama puanlar arasında anlamlı fark olduğu, işle bütünleşme öntest puanlarına göre sontestten aldıkları ortalama puanlar arasında ise anlamlı bir fark olmadığı bulunmuştur. OSB tanılu çocuğa sahip babaların eş ve mesleki tükenmişlik puanlarının azaltılmasında etkili olduğu belirlenen bu programın benzer özelliklere sahip babalara psikolojik danışmanlar tarafından uygulanmasının yararlı olacağı düşünülmektedir. Ayrıca OSB tanılu çocuğa sahip babalar üzerinde eş tükenmişliği ve mesleki tükenmişliğinin yanında yaşam doyumu, evlilik uyumu stres, kaygı öz-yeterlik, gibi psikolojik değişkenlerin de dahil edildiği programların hazırlanıp sınanabileceği düşünülmektedir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Otizm, baba, eş tükenmişliği, mesleki tükenmişlik, işle bütünleşme.