

Intervenciones desde el modelo cognitivo comportamental para tratar la sintomatología ansiosa en menores con TEA: una revisión de avances científicos

Nombres y apellidos

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RESUMEN

El Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA) es una condición del neurodesarrollo que con frecuencia se asocia a la presencia de sintomatología ansiosa, con una prevalencia estimada entre el 50 % y el 79 %. Esta comorbilidad tiene un impacto significativo en la calidad de vida de los niños, afectando su desarrollo emocional, social, académico y familiar. La presente monografía tuvo como objetivo identificar las estrategias de intervención empleadas por la Terapia Cognitivo-Conductual (TCC) en el tratamiento de la ansiedad en niños con TEA, a partir de una revisión de estudios científicos publicados entre 2020 y 2024. Se analizaron quince estudios empíricos seleccionados bajo los criterios del modelo PRISMA, lo que permitió identificar avances significativos en la adaptación de la TCC a las características particulares de los niños dentro del espectro autista. Entre las técnicas más empleadas destacan la psicoeducación emocional, la exposición gradual, la reestructuración cognitiva, el entrenamiento en habilidades sociales y la incorporación de prácticas de mindfulness. Todas estas intervenciones han sido ajustadas metodológicamente para responder a las necesidades cognitivas, comunicativas y sensoriales del niño con TEA, mediante recursos como apoyos visuales, lenguaje concreto, sesiones estructuradas y la participación de los padres como co-terapeutas. Los hallazgos indican que las intervenciones grupales realizadas en contextos escolares, comunitarios o virtuales pueden ser eficaces, siempre que se implementen con una planificación estructurada, manuales validados y enfoques centrados en la familia. Además, la integración de técnicas de tercera generación como el mindfulness y el yoga ha demostrado efectos positivos en aspectos complementarios como la autorregulación emocional y el funcionamiento ejecutivo. No obstante, aún se debate sobre su aplicabilidad universal y su eficacia en función del perfil cognitivo del niño. El rol de los padres resulta clave en la implementación y mantenimiento de los tratamientos, tanto por su participación directa en las sesiones como por su influencia en la continuidad del proceso terapéutico. Sin embargo, también se identifican obstáculos significativos como la sobrecarga emocional, la falta de formación específica y las barreras socioculturales, que pueden limitar la eficacia de las intervenciones. Pese a los avances constatados, la revisión revela limitaciones metodológicas en la mayoría de los estudios analizados, tales como muestras pequeñas, ausencia de grupos control activos y diversidad en los instrumentos de evaluación. Estas áreas de mejoras metodológicas ponen de relieve la necesidad de continuar desarrollando investigaciones aplicadas que permitan estandarizar protocolos, definir predictores de éxito terapéutico y adaptar las estrategias a la diversidad cultural y funcional de los niños con TEA. Palabras clave: Terapia Cognitivo-Conductual, Trastorno del Espectro Autista, ansiedad infantil, Estrategias de Intervención, Adaptación Terapéutica.

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ABSTRACT

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition frequently associated with symptoms of anxiety, with an estimated prevalence ranging from 50% to 79%. This comorbidity significantly impacts children's quality of life, affecting their emotional, social, academic, and family development. The aim of this monograph was to identify the intervention strategies employed by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in treating anxiety in children with ASD, based on a review of scientific studies published between 2020 and 2024. Fifteen empirical studies were analyzed, selected according to PRISMA model criteria, allowing the identification of significant advances in adapting CBT to the particular characteristics of children on the autism spectrum. Among the most commonly used techniques are emotional psychoeducation, gradual exposure, cognitive restructuring, social skills training, and the incorporation of mindfulness practices. All these interventions have been methodologically adjusted to meet the cognitive, communicative, and sensory needs of children with ASD through tools such as visual supports, concrete language, structured sessions, and the active involvement of parents as co-therapists. Findings indicate that group interventions conducted in school, community, or virtual settings can be effective, provided they are implemented with structured planning, validated manuals, and family-centered approaches. Additionally, the integration of third-wave techniques such as mindfulness and yoga has shown positive effects in complementary areas such as emotional self-regulation and executive functioning. However, there is ongoing debate about their universal applicability and their effectiveness depending on the child's cognitive profile. The role of parents is crucial in both implementing and maintaining treatments, due to their direct participation in sessions and their influence on the continuity of the therapeutic process. Nonetheless, significant challenges are also identified, such as emotional overload, lack of specific training, and sociocultural barriers, which may limit the effectiveness of interventions. Despite the encouraging progress, the review reveals methodological limitations in most of the analyzed studies, such as small sample sizes, absence of active control groups, and variability in assessment instruments. These methodological shortcomings underscore the need to continue developing applied research aimed at standardizing protocols, identifying predictors of therapeutic success, and tailoring strategies to the cultural and functional diversity of children with ASD.

Key Words: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Autism Spectrum Disorder, childhood anxiety, Intervention Strategies, Therapeutic Adaptation.

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