



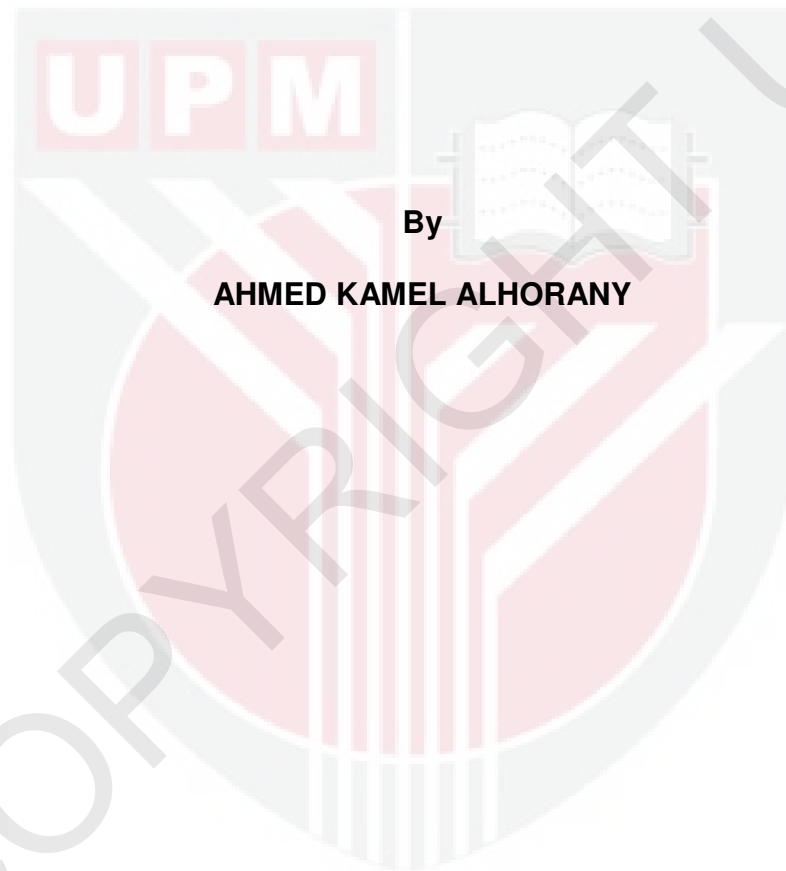
**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING TREATMENT ON MARITAL  
ADJUSTMENT, PARENTING STRESS, AND DEPRESSION AMONG  
PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN IN JORDAN***

**AHMED KAMEL ALHORANY**

**FPP 2012 19**

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ADJUSTMENT, PARENTING STRESS, AND DEPRESSION AMONG  
PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN IN JORDAN**



By

**AHMED KAMEL ALHORANY**

© This Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

May 2012

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING TREATMENT ON MARITAL ADJUSTMENT, PARENTING STRESS, AND DEPRESSION AMONG PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN IN JORDAN**

By

**AHMED KAMEL ALHORANY**

**May 2012**

**Chairman: Siti Aishah Hassan, PhD**

**Faculty: Educational Studies**

Autism is a prevalent developmental disorder with prominent impairments in social reciprocity, language impairment and restricted repetitive behaviors or interest. It disturbs the autistic individuals and the people involved with them. Particularly, parents of autistic children have to encounter difficulties and challenges triggered by their children. They experience higher risks of marital discord, parenting stress, and depression. Although group counseling is known to be cost-effective treatment and has been recommended for parents of autistic children, literature remains scarce for Jordanians. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of group counseling treatment (with structural family therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy) on

marital adjustment, parenting stress and depression in parents of autistic children in the city of Irbid, Jordan.

The study adopted a randomized control pretest-posttest design with one month follow up. Participants consisted of 30 males and 30 females were randomly assigned to an experimental group (group counseling treatment) and to a control group (no treatment). The instruments employed were the Dyadic Adjustment scale (DAS) to measure marital adjustment, the Parenting Stress Scale (PSS) to measure parenting stress and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) to measure depression. The collected data were coded and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 16.

Results of repeated-measures ANOVA showed that there were significant differences in the marital adjustment, parenting stress, and depression scores between the experimental and control group over time but there were partial significant interaction effects with gender. The results suggested 48% significant improvement in marital adjustment, 38 % and 50% of reductions in parenting stress and depression respectively. Depression continued to decrease even after the treatment was over. Furthermore, at significant level  $\alpha=.01$ , the results of MANOVA revealed that the mean scores of marital adjustment sub-dimensions (cohesion, consensus, and satisfaction) for the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group, In conclusion, the findings indicated that the group counseling treatment was effective in improving

the marital adjustment as well as in reducing parenting stress and depression in parents of autistic children in the city of Irbid, Jordan.

Theoretically, this study supports the amalgamation of key concepts of structural family therapy and cognitive behavior therapy in a form of group counseling treatment for Jordanian parents. Findings on marital adjustment sub-dimensions strengthen the notion that Arab families are enmeshed with high regard to cohesion and consensus. Practically, the findings of the study have implications for mental health centers and for marital and family therapists who provide treatment for parents of autistic children. Future studies of different populations may be needed to replicate the findings and for generalization.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi syarat bagi mendapatkan Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN RAWATAN KAUNSELING KELOMPOK KE ATAS PENYESUAIAN  
PERKAHWINAN, TEKANAN KEIBUBAAPAN DAN KEMURUNGAN DALAM  
KALANGAN IBU-BAPA KEPADA KANAK-KANAK AUTISTIK DI JORDAN**

Oleh

**AHMED KAMEL ALHORANY**

**Mei 2012**

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Autisme adalah kecacatan nyata dalam perkembangan kanak-kanak yang mengganggu kesalingan sosial, kemahiran dalam bahasa dan tingkah laku atau minat berulang yang terhad. Keadaan ini mengganggu individu autistik dan orang-orang yang terlibat dengan mereka. Terutama sekali, ibu bapa kanak-kanak autistik yang perlu menghadapi masalah dan cabaran yang dicetuskan oleh anak-anak mereka. Mereka mengalami risiko masalah perkahwinan, tekanan keibubapaan dan kemurungan yang lebih tinggi berbanding dengan ibu bapa kepada kanak-kanak normal. Walaupun kaunseling kelompok telah

dikenalpasti sebagai salah satu rawatan yang berkesan dan disyorkan untuk ibu bapa kepada kanak-kanak autistik, literatur yang melibatkan rakyat Jordan masih terhad. Seiringin dengan itu, tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan rawatan kaunseling berkelompok (dengan terapi keluarga struktural dan terapi kognitif tingkahlaku) terhadap penyesuaian perkahwinan, tekanan keibubapaan dan dan kemurungan dalam kalangan ibu bapa kanak-kanak autistik di bandar Irbid, Jordan.

Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kumpulan kawalan rawak ujian pra ujian pasca dengan satu bulan susulan. Peserta terdiri dari 30 lelaki dan 30 perempuan yang dipilih secara rawak untuk kumpulan eksperimen (rawatan kaunseling berkelompok) dan kumpulan kawalan (tanpa rawatan). Instrumen yang digunapakai adalah Skala Penyelarasan Diadic (*Dyadic Adjustment Scale* - DAS) untuk mengukur penyesuaian perkahwinan, Skala Tekanan Keibubapaan(*Parenting Stress Scale* -PSS) untuk mengukur tahap tekanan ibu bapaan dan Inventori Kemurungan Beck (*Beck Depression Inventory* -BDI) untuk mengukur kemurungan. Data yang dikumpul telah dikodkan dan kemudian dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 16.

Keputusan ujian *repeated-measures ANOVA* menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penyesuaian perkahwinan, tekanan keibubapaan, dan skor kemurungan dari masa ke semasa bagi kumpulan eksperimen tetapi kesan interaksi separa yang signifikan dengan jantina. Dapatan menunjukkan peningkatan sebanyak 48% dalam penyesuaian

perkahwinan, sementara terdapat 38% dan 50% pengurangan dalam tekanan keibubapaan dan kemurungan. Kemurungan terus menurun walaupun rawatan telah tamat. Tambahan pula, hasil daripada ujian MANOVA menunjukkan bahawa skor kumpulan eksperimen adalah jauh lebih tinggi daripada kumpulan kawalan bagi sub-dimensi penyesuaian perkahwinan (perpaduan, kesepakatan dan kepuasan), pada tahap kesignifikanan  $\alpha = .01$ . Kesimpulannya, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa rawatan kaunseling berkelompok adalah berkesan untuk membantu meningkatkan penyesuaian perkahwinan serta untuk mengurangkan tekanan keibubapaan dan kemurungan ibu bapa kepada kanak-kanak autistik di bandar Irbid, Jordan.

Secara teori, kajian ini menyokong penggabungan konsep utama terapi struktural keluarga dan terapi tingkah laku kognitif dalam bentuk rawatan kaunseling untuk ibu bapa di Jordan. Dapatan bagi sub-dimensi penyesuaian perkahwinan mengukuhkan tanggapan bahawa keluarga Arab adalah terikat terutama sekali bagi perpaduan dan kesepakatan. Secara praktikalnya, penemuan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi kepada pusat kesihatan mental, ahli terapi perkahwinan dan keluarga yang menyediakan rawatan bagi ibu bapa kanak-kanak autistik. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian yang lebih mendalam pada masa hadapan dalam populasi yang berbeza mungkin diperlukan untuk mengulangi penemuan dan untuk tujuan generalisasi.



## DEDICATION

The study is dedicated to my mother, Hjh. Aminh Alhorany

Who passed away in 2007

Also my deepest appreciation goes to my lovely father

Kamel Muhammad Alhorany



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank my major supervisor, Dr. Siti Aishah Hassan, who has been very, very supportive. Her supports, encouragements, advices are really appreciated. To Dr. Siti Aishah, may Allah continue blessing you with the good heart that you have and everyone who is together with you, *Amin.*

Second, I would also like to say a special thank you to the members of my committee, Dr. Rumaya Juhari, and Dr. Maznah Baba, each of you has helped improve my study, as well as allowed me to gain further knowledge and insight which I will surely apply throughout my career.

Third, I thank my supporting systems that comprise of friends and families. My friends and families gave always shared my laughter and joy as well as sorrow and sadness. Dear friends, brothers, sisters I wish to record all of your names here but, more importantly, I wish your names to be recorded in the hereafter.

Finally, a special thank goes to my lovely sister Fatemah Alhorany for her unlimited support.

## APPROVAL

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 29 May 2012 to conduct the final examination of Ahmed AlHorany on his thesis entitled “effectiveness of group counseling treatment on marital adjustment, parenting stress, and depression in parents of autistic children in Jordan” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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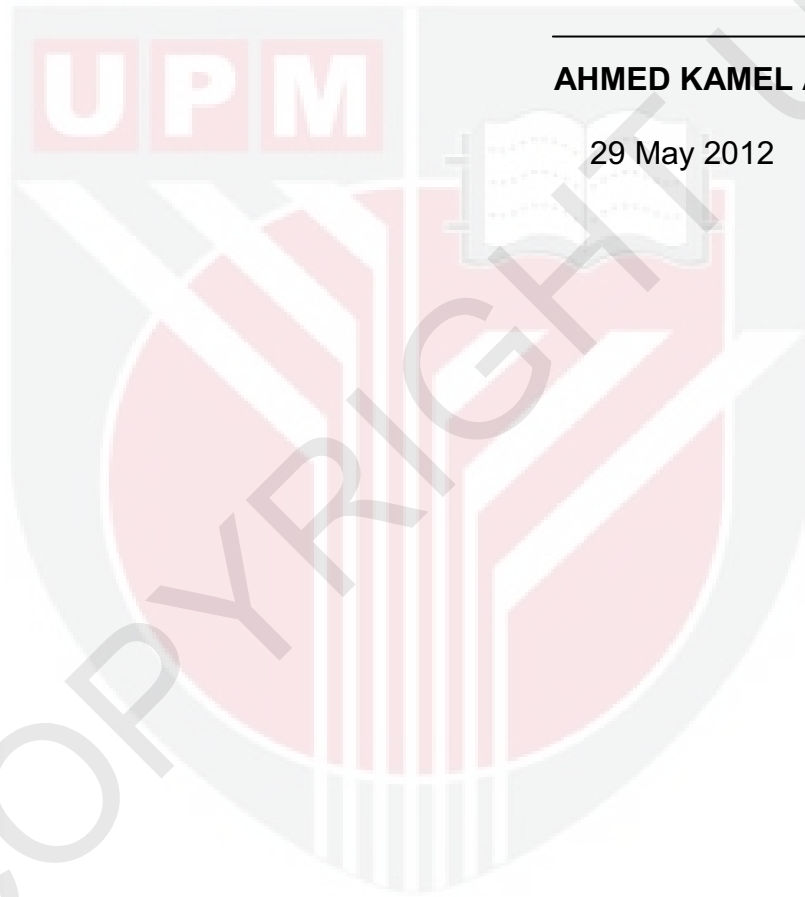
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Date

## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotation and citation which have been dully acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.



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**AHMED KAMEL ALHORANY**

29 May 2012



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	II
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	V
<b>DEDICATION</b>	VIII
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	IX
<b>APPROVAL</b>	X
<b>DECLARATION</b>	XII
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	XIII
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	XVII
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	XIX
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Chapter Overview	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	8
1.4 Research Questions	10
1.5 Objective of the Study	11
1.5.1 General Objective	11
1.5.2 Specific Objectives	11
1.6 Hypotheses	12
1.7 Significance of the Study	13
1.8 Definition of Terms	15
1.8.1 Autism	15
1.8.2 Marital Adjustment	16
1.8.3 Parenting stress	16
1.8.4 Depression	17
1.8.5 Group Counseling Treatment	18
1.9 Limitations of the Study	19
<b>2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Chapter Overview	21
2.2 History of Autism	21
2.2.1 Characteristics of Autism	24

2.3	Families Living with an Autistic Child	26
2.4	Marital Adjustment	29
2.4.1	Factors Affected Marital Adjustment	30
2.4.2	Marital Adjustment and Parents of Children with Disabilities	33
2.4.3	Gender Differences in Marital Adjustment	39
2.5	Parenting Stress	41
2.5.1	Factors Affected Parenting Stress	43
2.5.2	Parenting Stress and Parents of Children with Disabilities	47
2.5.3	Gender Differences in Parenting Stress	49
2.6	Depression	51
2.6.1	Factors Affected Depression	53
2.6.2	Depression and Parents of Children with Disabilities	54
2.6.3	Gender Differences in Depression	57
2.7	Marital Adjustment, Parenting Stress, and Depression	59
2.8	Conceptual Framework	63
2.9	Theoretical Framework	64
2.9.1	Family Structural Therapy	65
2.9.2	Cognitive Behavior Therapy	77
2.10	The Intervention for Parents of Disabilities Children	83
2.10.1	The Double ABCX Model of Family Adaptation	87
2.10.2	Group Counseling	94
2.11	Theoretical Framework Diagram	109
2.12	Chapter Summary	110
<b>3</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>111</b>
3.1	Chapter Overview	111
3.2	Research Design	111
3.2.1	Threats to the Research Validity	114
3.3	Population and Sampling	119
3.3.1	Determination of the Sample Size and Power Analysis	119
3.3.2	Screening and Selection	120
3.3.3	Sampling Procedure	121
3.4	Location of the Study	126
3.5	Instrumentations	126

3.5.1	Demographic Questionnaire	126
3.5.2	The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)	127
3.5.3	Parenting Stress Scale (PSS)	134
3.5.4	Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)	138
3.6	Pilot Test	141
3.7	Data Collection Procedures	142
3.8	Description of Group Counseling Treatment of This Study	145
3.8.1	Treatment Administration	145
3.8.2	Treatment Condition	146
3.8.3	Overall Goal	147
3.8.4	General Procedures of Session	147
3.8.5	Structure of Group Session	148
3.8.6	Summarize of the Sessions	164
3.9	Data Analysis	166
<b>4</b>	<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>169</b>
4.1	Chapter Overview	169
4.2	Section 1: Descriptive Analysis	169
4.2.1	Participants' Profile	170
4.2.2	Preliminary Data Analysis	171
4.3	Section 2: Hypothesis Testing	174
4.3.1	Marital Adjustment	174
4.3.2	Parenting Stress	182
4.3.3	Depression	187
4.4	Section 3: Discussion	192
4.4.1	Marital Adjustment	193
4.4.2	Parenting Stress	194
4.4.3	Depression	199
<b>5</b>	<b>CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>202</b>
5.1	Chapter Overview	202
5.2	Summary of the Study	202
5.3	Conclusion	206
5.4	Implications of the study	209



5.4.1	Theoretical Implications	209
5.4.2	Practical Implications	212
5.5.	Suggestions for Future Studies	217
<b>REFERENCES</b>		221
<b>APPENDICES</b>		241
<b>BIODATA OF STUDENT</b>		273

