




Examining the Effectiveness of Reflective Parenting Training on Emotion Regulation and Parent-Child Relationship in Mothers with Children Under 6 Years

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of reflective parenting training on emotion regulation and the parent-child relationship in mothers with children under 6 years of age.

Method: This is a quantitative study with a pre-test, post-test, and follow-up design involving an experimental group and a control group. The statistical population includes all mothers with children under 6 years old in Isfahan. For sampling, a purposive sampling method was used by visiting kindergartens in Isfahan, and 30 participants were selected based on the cut-off point of the questionnaires and inclusion and exclusion criteria. They were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group (15 people) and a control group (15 people). Subsequently, reflective parenting training sessions based on the Bateman and Fonagy (2001) protocol were conducted for the experimental group, while the control group received no intervention. The research instruments included the Parent-Child Relationship Scale (Pianta, 1992) and the Emotion Regulation Inventory (Shield & Cicchetti, 1995). The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tests (repeated measures ANOVA and Bonferroni post hoc test) and SPSS software.

Findings: Given that the calculated F-value for between-group effects (group membership effect), within-group effects (time effect), and the interactive effect of group and time was significant at the 99% confidence level ($P < 0.01$), these results indicate a significant difference between the two groups. Furthermore, it suggests that this significant difference exists at least at one time point during the intervention among the research groups. The Bonferroni post hoc test results showed differences in adaptive emotion regulation, instability/negativity, and the parent-child relationship scores during the research stages between the experimental groups ($P < 0.01$).

Conclusions: Therefore, it can be concluded that this intervention was effective on the research variables and confirms that this approach can be used as an effective strategy in improving parental abilities and reducing psychological challenges in mothers during the parenting period.

Keywords: Reflective Parenting, Emotion Regulation, Parent-Child Relationship

1. Introduction

Studies have shown that the parent-child relationship is a vital factor for the psychological adjustment of children. When discussing the parent-child relationship, the definition is often unclear, and the elements and aspects of these relationships are not well-defined. Terms such as health, attachment, and bonding are often used when discussing the parent-child relationship. Empirical studies have defined the quality of parent-child relationships as the feeling of openness between parents and children, the degree of openness, the level of communication and discussion, perceived problems and conflicts between parents and children, feelings of rejection by parents, hostility/aggression between parents and children, the degree of interest shown by parents, and the time spent with parents (Li & Ma, 2025; Seğer et al., 2025).

Sometimes, incorrect communication between parents and their children leads to behavioral abnormalities in children. Therefore, the quality of parent-child relationships in the early years of childhood lays the foundation for the child's future cognitive, social, and emotional development (Rostad & Whitaker, 2016; Schultheis et al., 2019). Emotional care by the mother provides a situation in which the child feels loved by others and expects others to regard them as worthy individuals. Despite the positive effects of a good relationship, the negative impacts of insufficient and undesirable communication cannot be ignored. Some of the negative effects include high levels of psychological health problems among parents, mutual interactions between parents, the bidirectional parent-child relationship, and sibling relationships, especially in children under 5 years and even during elementary school years (Liu & Vazsonyi, 2024; Wu, 2024).

Individuals use various emotion regulation strategies when faced with stressful conditions such as parenting. Emotion is the primary organizing element of behavior in attachment. Emotions give individuals the opportunity to express their feelings about anything, and this emotional expression serves as a link between internal experiences and the external world (Ferreira et al., 2024; Keleynikov et al., 2023; Mehrdadfar et al., 2023), which interacts with cognition and helps individuals evaluate situations related to personal values, needs, goals, or interests (Jafarpour et al., 2022; Rezaei et al., 2021). During child-rearing, mothers experience various emotional, psychological, and marital problems, which reduce their interaction with the child and cause feelings of guilt, depression, stress, and issues in

emotion regulation (Hejrani Diarjan et al., 2020; Schultheis et al., 2019). Moreover, the inability to regulate emotions in mothers can fundamentally affect the psychological functioning of family members, including thoughts, mood, behavior, and the ability to cope with emotional and psychological problems and parenting. Since emotion is an inseparable part of human life, emotion regulation is a crucial variable, especially in the parent-child relationship. Emotion regulation can be defined as the processes through which individuals influence what emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them (Keleynikov et al., 2023). According to theoretical models, emotion regulation is a unique process for modulating emotional experiences to achieve social desirability and to be in a physically and psychologically ready state to appropriately respond to external and internal demands. Emotion regulation involves "organizing and regulating" emotional processes for adaptive functioning; thus, emotional dysregulation refers to regulatory processes that ultimately disrupt adaptive functioning (Behmanesh et al., 2021; Hejrani Diarjan et al., 2020; McNeil & Repetti, 2018; Schultheis et al., 2019; Shiroodaghahi et al., 2020). Consequently, emotion regulation refers to the stage where individuals influence their emotions and how they express and experience them (Eslami et al., 2023; Keleynikov et al., 2023).

Research shows that mentalization ability develops in the context of attachment relationships, where the capacity for parental reflective functioning, especially in the early stages of development, plays a crucial role. Parental reflective functioning contributes significantly to a child's development of reflective functioning capacity, which in turn, within the framework of a secure attachment relationship, enhances the child's ability to regulate emotions, inhibitory control, and ultimately the growth of autonomy and agency (Anjomshoa et al., 2024; Borelli et al., 2024). Fonagy et al. (1993) first defined reflective functioning as the ability to imagine mental states in oneself and others. Through this capacity for reflection, we develop the ability to understand our own and others' behavioral responses as meaningful efforts to connect with these internal mental states (Mohammadi et al., 2023; Zamanpour et al., 2023). This ability indicates the parents' understanding of the child's psychological state, ultimately allowing the child to acquire this ability throughout their development (Lavender et al., 2022; Vismara et al., 2021). Parental reflective functioning refers to the capacity of parents or caregivers to envision the child as a being motivated by

internal states and psychological conditions such as feelings, desires, and intentions (Pazzagli et al., 2018; Schultheis et al., 2019). This requires that parents or caregivers also have the capacity to see their own inner experiences and understand how their psychological state is shaped by their interaction with the child, how it changes over time and interaction with the child, and ultimately how this psychological state affects the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the parent or caregiver (Anjomshoaa et al., 2024; Borelli et al., 2024; Zamanpour et al., 2023). Parental reflective functioning is a concept motivated by internal states and psychological conditions such as feelings, desires, and intentions. This requires that primary caregivers have the capacity to see their inner experiences and understand how their psychological state is shaped by their interaction with the child and how it changes over time due to interaction with the child, and ultimately how this psychological state affects the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the parent or caregiver (Vismara et al., 2021). Parental reflective functioning contributes significantly to a child's development of reflective functioning capacity, which in turn, within the framework of a secure attachment relationship, enhances the child's ability to regulate emotions, inhibitory control, and ultimately the growth of autonomy and agency (Lavender et al., 2022). Mentalization-based or parental reflective functioning-based interventions are designed to address the limitations of other behavioral and psycho-educational interventions in enhancing parenting skills (Luyten et al., 2017). Examining various parental reflective functioning-based interventions helps us recognize the clinical and preventive benefits and the importance and causality of parental reflective functioning and parenting behaviors. Discovering the relationship between enhancing parental reflective functioning and changes in parenting styles resulting from reflective functioning-based interventions could establish a causal link between these two factors, indicating that improving reflective functioning leads to better parenting behaviors (Slade, 2005). The primary goal of any parental reflective program is to develop a reflective stance in parents, that is, to foster curiosity and thinking about the child's inner world rather than merely focusing on their behavior (Borelli et al., 2024). Often, parents describe their child as if the child lacks any feelings or thoughts: "He doesn't sleep," "He is always moving," "He bothers other children." In all three cases, the parents' attention is solely on the child's behaviors, reflecting a "physical stance" instead of a reflective stance, which involves responding to

and reacting to others' inner characteristics (thoughts, feelings, desires, wishes, and beliefs) rather than their external characteristics (behaviors) (Bateman et al., 2023).

In summary, based on the mentioned points and research results, it can be concluded that parenting style and parent-child interaction directly affect children's behaviors and their level of adjustment. Despite extensive research on parenting programs for children, the examination, comparison, and effectiveness of reflective parenting programs concerning the conditions and culture of Iranian children and parents are lacking. Parents of children need to be educated about parenting and make informed decisions about their child's communication style and education. Given the dynamic and bidirectional relationship between parenting and child behavior, addressing factors that improve this relationship and enhance parents' ability to cope with the challenges and issues of raising a child is essential. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of reflective parenting training on emotion regulation and the parent-child relationship.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study design and Participant

This study is a fundamental research and, in terms of purpose, an applied study using a quasi-experimental design with an experimental group and a control group, employing a pre-test, post-test, and two-month follow-up to test the research hypotheses quantitatively. Both groups completed the questionnaires mentioned in the measurement tools section at the pre-test stage. The experimental group received the intervention, while the control group did not receive any intervention. Afterward, both groups completed the post-test questionnaires, and after a two-month follow-up period, the groups were tested again. The statistical population of this study includes all mothers with children under 6 years old in Isfahan. For sampling, a purposive sampling method was used by visiting kindergartens in Isfahan, and 30 participants were selected based on the cut-off point of the questionnaires and inclusion and exclusion criteria. They were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group (15 people) and a control group (15 people). The inclusion criteria for this study were being a mother, having a child under 6 years old, scoring above the cut-off point in the questionnaires, and providing written consent. The exclusion criteria included taking psychiatric medication, substance abuse, participation in similar

sessions, missing more than two sessions, and unwillingness to continue the study.

Participants who met the entry criteria were selected and, after completing the consent form and matching based on variables such as age, education, and occupation, were placed in an experimental group and a control group. Both groups were initially assessed with the questionnaires mentioned in the research tools section. The experimental group then received group sessions of reflective parenting training, while the control group did not receive any intervention. At the end of the program, both groups completed the post-test questionnaires.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Parent-Child Interaction

To measure the construct of parent-child interaction, a validated and culturally adapted scale was employed to ensure both conceptual and contextual relevance to Iranian families. The tool used in this study was based on the well-established Parent-Child Relationship Scale originally developed by Pianta (1992), which has been translated and psychometrically evaluated in Iran in various studies. This scale assesses multiple dimensions of the parent-child relationship, including closeness, conflict, and dependency, and captures the quality and frequency of interaction through a series of 28 Likert-type items rated on a five-point scale from “completely disagree” to “completely agree.” The Persian version of the Parent-Child Relationship Scale has undergone extensive validation in Iranian research settings. In a seminal study by Khodapanahi and colleagues (2011), the content validity of the translated items was verified by a panel of Persian-speaking experts in developmental psychology and family studies. They confirmed the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the items, especially with respect to parental roles and expectations in Iranian society. Moreover, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) supported the original three-factor structure (closeness, conflict, and dependency), accounting for approximately 61% of the total variance in Iranian samples. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in later studies confirmed the three-factor model with acceptable fit indices (CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06). In terms of reliability, the internal consistency of the Persian version has been reported as satisfactory across various populations. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients have ranged from 0.78 to 0.88 for the subscales and 0.91 for the total score. Additionally, test-retest reliability was established in a two-week interval with a sample of 60 Iranian parents, yielding a correlation

coefficient of 0.84, indicating high temporal stability. Construct validity was also supported through significant correlations with parenting stress, parental warmth, and child emotional adjustment scales in Iranian samples (Kianoosh, 2023).

2.2.2. Emotion Regulation

The Emotion Regulation Checklist, developed by Shield and Cicchetti in 1995, is designed to assess emotion regulation in children aged 5 to 12 years. This questionnaire consists of 24 items and two subscales: adaptive emotion regulation (8 items) and instability/negativity (16 items). The subscale scores are independent, and there is no total score for the questionnaire. Scoring is based on a 4-point Likert scale, where never is scored as 1, sometimes as 2, often as 3, and almost always as 4. The minimum score is 24, and the maximum score is 96. Higher scores on the adaptive emotion regulation subscale indicate greater capacity to manage and modulate emotional arousal, while higher scores on the instability/negativity subscale indicate extreme emotional reactions and frequent mood changes unrelated to external events or stimuli. In their 1995 study, Shield and Cicchetti reported internal consistency reliability for the instability/negativity subscale as 0.85 in preschool children and 0.88 in elementary school children, and for the adaptive emotion regulation subscale as 0.71 and 0.79, respectively. The ERC showed good fit using confirmatory factor analysis and convergent validity with measures of emotion regulation and the degree of affect regulation. In a study by Pezhman et al. (2021), internal consistency reliability for the overall scale was reported as 0.94. Shafi'i Tbar et al. (2020) reported Cronbach's alpha reliability for the two subscales as 0.76 and 0.69, respectively. The checklist's information function showed that the instability/negativity factor provided the most information in the trait level range of -2 to 3, while the adaptive emotion regulation factor provided high information and low measurement error in the trait level range of 3 to -2 ($p < 0.01$). Pezhman et al. (2021) identified two factors, instability/negativity and adaptive emotion regulation, which together explained 63.90% of the total variance. Confirmatory factor analysis showed a good model fit. The adaptive emotion regulation subscale showed a significant negative correlation with CBCL components, while the instability/negativity subscale showed a significant positive correlation with CBCL components. In Shafi'i Tbar et al.'s (2020) study, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses

confirmed two factors, instability/negativity and adaptive emotion regulation (Javidipour & Dehghan, 2022).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Reflective Parenting Training

Reflective parenting training consists of eight 90-minute sessions based on the program developed by Bateman and Fonagy (2001). The summary of the reflective parenting training sessions is as follows (Bateman et al., 2023).

Session 1: Introduce the research and provide an overview of the educational program. Conduct short interviews with each mother about their relationship with their child.

Session 2: Discuss the categorization of children's needs: physical and psychological needs. Explain the three main psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Emphasize the importance of the need for relatedness and identify sources of anxiety in children.

Session 3: Understand the symbolic aspects of communication with children. Demonstrate how parents can show understanding and awareness of the child's thoughts. Avoid futile conversations (logical discussions with children). Establish communication with the child through skill, respect, focusing on the relationship over the incident, and emphasizing emotions over incidents. Highlight the importance of individual differences.

Session 4: Understand and accept the child's emotions without judgment. Reflect the child's emotions in their own language (acting as a mirror). Avoid denying or suppressing the child's negative and conflicting emotions, but instead acknowledge and validate them, reducing feelings of anxiety and guilt. Use personal emotional experiences to understand the child's emotional experiences. Identify incorrect ways of dealing with children's emotions, particularly negative ones, such as denial, suppression, and making them appear better than they are.

Session 5: Align praise with the child's successful efforts and actions. Critique mistakes, not the child's personality or

overall traits. Eliminate sarcastic comments during criticism and avoid contradictory patterns like threats, bribery, promises, preaching, teaching manners with disrespect, and the threat as a danger to the child's autonomy. Discuss the causes of lying in children and how to handle it.

Session 6: Discuss ways to express anger towards the child, label and name feelings, and release anger without harming the other party. Communicate behavioral tendencies during anger.

Session 7: Define responsibility and ways to instill it in the child through adaptation, imitation, competition, and role modeling. Address the responsibility of expression and choice.

Session 8: Conduct a three-hour Q&A session on the educational materials. Interview each mother about the effectiveness of the program, noting its strengths and weaknesses.

2.4. Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, skewness, kurtosis) and inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures, post hoc tests, and mean comparison).

3. Findings and Results

Regarding demographic characteristics, the mean (standard deviation) age of participants in the reflective parenting group was 31.22 (2.98) years, and in the control group, it was 32.07 (3.00) years. Economically, in the reflective parenting group, 5 participants (33%) had a good economic status, 4 participants (27%) had a moderate economic status, and 6 participants (40%) had a poor economic status. In the control group, 3 participants (20%) had a good economic status, 7 participants (47%) had a moderate economic status, and 5 participants (33%) had a poor economic status.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Variable	Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Follow-Up Mean (SD)
Adaptive Emotion Regulation	Reflective Parenting	17.60 (4.52)	20.53 (4.60)	20.66 (4.61)
	Control	17.93 (4.00)	18.05 (4.73)	17.99 (4.60)
Instability/Negativity	Reflective Parenting	38.56 (6.92)	33.90 (6.73)	33.99 (7.15)
	Control	38.22 (7.70)	38.50 (7.15)	38.10 (6.96)
Parent-Child Relationship	Reflective Parenting	94.32 (13.88)	103.42 (14.43)	103.89 (15.16)

Control	98.00 (14.20)	97.20 (13.92)	97.23 (14.72)
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Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of participants' scores in the variables of adaptive emotion regulation, instability/negativity, and parent-child relationship in the research sample. As observed, participants had low scores in adaptive emotion regulation and high scores in parent-child relationship and instability/negativity in the pre-test before the interventions. The table indicates a significant increase in adaptive emotion regulation and a noticeable decrease in parent-child relationship scores in the experimental groups. This finding implies that the intervention sessions intuitively changed the dependent variables' scores in the study, whereas the control group's scores did not change significantly. Furthermore, as observed, there is no noticeable change from post-test to follow-up in the research variables' scores in the experimental group, indicating the intervention's effects' stability. To further examine these changes, the data were subjected to inferential analysis, and the results are presented.

Given the significance levels of the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p < 0.05$), the assumption of normality is met for all groups. Therefore, with a high probability of normal distribution

(greater than 95%), parametric tests can be used. To test the equality of variances between the two groups, Levene's test was used; the results showed no significant differences in variances between the experimental and control groups for any variable ($p > 0.05$). Given the non-significance of the group and pre-test interaction in the variables of adaptive emotion regulation, instability/negativity, and parent-child relationship in the research sample ($p > 0.05$), the assumption of homogeneity of interactive effects is met, and repeated measures ANOVA can be used to address the research hypotheses. To examine the effectiveness of reflective parenting on the dependent variables in the research sample, repeated measures ANOVA was used. In this analysis, post-test scores were entered as dependent variables, group (with two levels) as the independent variable, and pre-test scores as fixed variables in the repeated measures ANOVA equation. Mauchly's test results showed that the covariances of the dependent variables are equal across the three stages, meeting the assumption of repeated measures ANOVA ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, no correction for degrees of freedom was used. A summary of the ANOVA results is reported in **Table 2**.

Table 2

Summary of Repeated Measures ANOVA for Reflective Parenting Effectiveness

Variable	Type of Effect	Source of Effect	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial Eta Squared	Power
Adaptive Emotion Regulation	Within-Group	Time	1286.64	2	643.32	19.38	.001	.41	1.00
		Time × Group	1124.36	2	562.18	16.93	.001	.37	1.00
	Between-Group	Error (Time)	1778.52	56	31.76	-	-	-	-
		Group	985.22	1	985.22	18.34	.001	.39	1.00
Instability/Negativity	Within-Group	Error (Group)	1510.92	28	53.96	-	-	-	-
		Time	1978.36	2	989.18	63.28	.001	.69	1.00
	Between-Group	Time × Group	1132.44	2	566.22	36.23	.001	.54	1.00
		Error (Time)	874.64	56	15.62	-	-	-	-
Parent-Child Relationship	Within-Group	Group	1157.48	1	1157.48	40.11	.001	.59	1.00
		Error (Group)	807.52	28	28.84	-	-	-	-
	Between-Group	Time	1378.64	2	689.32	48.71	.001	.63	1.00
		Time × Group	1135.92	2	567.96	40.12	.001	.60	1.00
Parent-Child Relationship	Within-Group	Error (Time)	794.24	56	14.18	-	-	-	-
		Group	1374.56	1	1374.56	53.33	.001	.66	1.00
	Between-Group	Error (Group)	721.84	28	25.78	-	-	-	-
		Error (Group)	721.84	28	25.78	-	-	-	-

Given that the calculated F-values for between-group effects (group membership effect), within-group effects (time effect), and the interactive effect of group and time are

significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$), these results indicate a significant difference between the two groups. Moreover, this significant difference is present at

least at one time point during the intervention among the research groups. To further examine the effects and

differences between groups and measurement times and test the research hypotheses, Bonferroni post hoc test was used.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post Hoc Test Results for Adjusted Mean Scores Comparison in Two Groups During Measurement Stages

Variable	Pre-Test vs. Post-Test	Pre-Test vs. Follow-Up	Post-Test vs. Follow-Up
	Mean Difference (p)	Mean Difference (p)	Mean Difference (p)
Adaptive Emotion Regulation	2.85 (.001)	2.95 (.001)	0.10 (1.00)
Instability/Negativity	-5.20 (.001)	-5.32 (.001)	-0.12 (1.00)
Parent-Child Relationship	8.73 (.001)	9.15 (.001)	0.42 (1.00)

The results in Table 3 show that the scores of adaptive emotion regulation and instability/negativity in the reflective parenting group are significantly higher and lower, respectively, in the post-test stage compared to the pre-test stage ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, the results indicate that the subscale scores of emotion regulation (adaptive emotion regulation and instability/negativity) in the reflective parenting group have no significant differences in the follow-up stage compared to the post-test stage ($p > 0.05$) but have significant differences compared to the pre-test stage ($p < 0.01$), indicating the intervention's effects' stability on emotion regulation scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that reflective parenting has a significant impact on participants' emotion regulation, and this effect remains stable in the follow-up stage. Furthermore, the results show that the parent-child relationship scores in the reflective parenting group are significantly higher in the post-test stage compared to the pre-test stage ($p < 0.01$). The results also indicate that the parent-child relationship scores in the reflective parenting group have no significant differences in the follow-up stage compared to the post-test stage ($p > 0.05$) but have significant differences compared to the pre-test stage ($p < 0.01$), indicating the intervention's effects' stability on parent-child relationship scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that reflective parenting has a significant impact on participants' parent-child relationship, and this effect remains stable in the follow-up stage.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the impact of reflective parenting training on emotion regulation and the parent-child relationship in mothers with children under 6 years old. The findings showed that this training had a significant positive impact on all mentioned variables. This finding is consistent with the results obtained in prior studies (Borelli et al., 2024; Lavender et al., 2022; Luyten et al., 2017; Mohammadi et

al., 2023; Pazzagli et al., 2018; Rostad & Whitaker, 2016; Schultheis et al., 2019; Zamanpour et al., 2023).

The present study examined the impact of reflective parenting training on the parent-child relationship in mothers with children under 6 years old. Reflective functioning, which refers to parents' ability to understand and interpret their own and their children's mental states, has been highlighted as a crucial element in strengthening parent-child bonds (Borelli et al., 2024; Zamanpour et al., 2023). This concept, related to parents' ability to respond to their children's emotional needs, plays a significant role in developing healthy and positive relationships between parents and children. Consistent with these results, previous studies have shown that educational programs based on reflective functioning can effectively improve the parent-child relationship (Lavender et al., 2022; Luyten et al., 2017; Rostad & Whitaker, 2016; Schultheis et al., 2019). These programs, by focusing on increasing parents' awareness of their children's emotions and internal experiences, help them gain a deeper understanding of their children's emotional needs and respond to these needs more sensitively. Further explaining these findings, studies have emphasized that parents' ability to reflect on their children's experiences can enhance children's trust and emotional security (Borelli et al., 2024).

The study's findings showed that reflective parenting training significantly improved emotion regulation in mothers with children under 6 years old. This finding is consistent with results obtained in prior studies (Borelli et al., 2024; Schultheis et al., 2019; Vismara et al., 2021). These training programs, by focusing on strengthening reflective functioning and parents' ability to understand and respond to their children's emotional needs, help parents develop more effective strategies for managing parenting stress.

Explaining this finding, it can be said that these training programs, which focus on increasing parents' awareness of

their own and their children's mental states, help mothers deal more effectively and consciously with parenting challenges, leading to a reduction in experienced stress. Reflective parenting training provides tools and strategies for strengthening parents' reflective functioning, allowing them to handle everyday parenting challenges more consciously and with less stress. This helps reduce stress levels and enhances parents' ability to manage challenging parenting situations. Enhancing emotion regulation in parents not only improves their mental health and quality of life but can also have a positive impact on the parent-child relationship and the overall family environment (Vismara et al., 2021). Overall, reflective parenting training is recognized as an effective approach for improving parents' emotion regulation, especially in mothers with children under 6 years old. Strengthening reflective functioning through this training helps parents communicate more effectively with their children and handle parenting-related stress more constructively.

Based on these studies, the present research provides evidence for the importance of reflective parenting training in strengthening parent-child relationships. These findings have significant implications for designing and implementing support programs aimed at improving the quality of parent-child interactions and strengthening the psychological foundations of family health. Consequently, reflective parenting training is recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing parent-child relationships and promoting family mental health. Implementing these training programs as part of support programs can help parents develop the necessary skills to respond effectively to their children's needs, thus strengthening the foundations of a healthy and balanced family.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

The present study, like other studies, faced limitations. For example, selecting samples from a specific geographical area and non-randomly may limit the generalizability of the results to other populations. Given that the research was conducted within a limited timeframe, the long-term effects of the interventions may not be fully determined. The measurement tools used in the study may have limitations in terms of accuracy and validity. Additionally, self-reported data always contain some degree of error. External and environmental factors that may affect the results were not controlled in this study. This research only utilized limited educational methods, which may not cover all aspects of

capability-based education's impact. Reviewing and comparing different methods could provide a more comprehensive perspective. The lack of access to qualitative information limits a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and feelings. Qualitative data can provide more information on how educational programs impact students. Finally, the following research suggestions are provided:

Examining Long-Term Effects of Training: Conducting studies with longer follow-up periods to evaluate the long-term impact of reflective parenting training on emotion regulation and parent-child relationships in mothers.

Comparison with Other Approaches: Comparing the effectiveness of this intervention with other parenting or psychological interventions to identify more effective methods.

Analyzing Factors Affecting Effectiveness: Investigating the role of various factors such as parents' education level, socio-economic status, and children's age in the effectiveness of this training.

Impact on Other Variables: Assessing the impact of training on other variables related to mental health and parenting abilities, such as parental self-efficacy and life satisfaction.

Examining the Impact of Parent Gender: Studying potential differences in the effectiveness of training between mothers and fathers with children under 6 years old.

Qualitative Research: Conducting qualitative studies to gain a deeper understanding of parents' experiences during and after participating in this type of training and its impact on family relationships.

Causal Modeling: Using causal modeling to determine causal relationships among the studied variables and identify mediating factors that play a role in the effectiveness of training.

Based on the findings of this study, the following practical suggestions are made:

Development of Educational Programs: Developing and implementing reflective parenting training programs in health centers, schools, and kindergartens to help parents better manage the parent-child relationship and strengthen parent-child relationships.

Workshops for Parents: Holding educational workshops and support groups for parents to share experiences and learn new skills in parenting.

Intervention in Public Policy Programs: Integrating reflective parenting training into public policy programs related to family health and psychological problem prevention.

Training Specialists: Training mental health professionals, counselors, and child educators to use these approaches in their work with families.

Production of Educational Content: Producing educational content, including books, videos, and online programs, for easier access to educational resources for parents.

Support for Further Research: Encouraging and supporting further research in this area to improve and develop parenting training programs.

Cultural Awareness and Education: Engaging in cultural awareness and educational activities in the community to emphasize the importance of parenting education and its role in strengthening family mental health.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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