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The Evaluation of the Transformers Programme:

An Emotion Regulation Programme for People who have an Intellectual Disability.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that emotion regulation difficulties are common in people who have an intellectual disability. Not being able to manage their distressing emotions can lead to challenging behaviour such as verbal and physical violence and property destruction and can lead to injury, alienation, poor-self-esteem, and legal problems. Growing research suggests that people who have an intellectual disability have the ability to engage in and benefit from interventions that address their emotion regulation problems. The current thesis consists of four papers—a systematic literature review, programme description, a study regarding emotional identification, and a study about emotion regulation. The main aim of the research was to evaluate an emotion regulation programme known as Transformers that is being implemented at an intellectual disability service. Transformers is a group-based treatment programme that is run over a six-month period. Five participants with mild to moderate intellectual disability (aged 17-42 years) attended the Transformers programme and took part in the studies along with their caregivers. A single-case design was chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. Participants completed emotion recognition tasks and self-report measures of emotion regulation before, during, and after their involvement in the programme. Caregivers also rated the frequency of participants’ use of emotion regulation skills and incident reports provided insight into their ongoing behaviour. While the results showed that the Transformers programme was not effective in improving participants’ abilities to recognise emotion nonetheless participants did increase in their ability to use appropriate emotion regulation strategies and reduced the number of incidents of challenging behaviour. Overall, these preliminary findings suggest that the Transformers programme is a viable treatment option for people who have an intellectual disability who have difficulty managing their own emotions. While
the findings are encouraging, it is recommended that further research be carried out using larger sample sizes and longer follow up periods to establish the effectiveness of the programme.
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Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... III

Acknowledgments ...................................................................................................................... V

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................... VII

List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... XII

List of Figures ....................................................................................................................... XIII

Chapter 1: Thesis Overview .................................................................................................. 1
  Rationale............................................................................................................................... 1
  Overview............................................................................................................................. 2

Chapter 2: Emotion Regulation in Intellectual Disability: A Review of the Evidence .......... 6
  Abstract............................................................................................................................... 7
    Defining Important Terms: Emotion and Emotion Regulation ................................. 8
    Emotion Regulation Strategies ................................................................................ 10
    Emotion Regulation and Psychopathology .............................................................. 10
    Emotion Regulation and ID ..................................................................................... 11
  Method............................................................................................................................ 13
  Findings and Discussion................................................................................................. 15
    Limited Research ......................................................................................................... 15
    Operational Definitions............................................................................................... 25
    Sampling ....................................................................................................................... 26
    Measurement of Emotion Regulation ................................................................. 27
    Evidence of Emotion Regulation Difficulties....................................................... 29
Chapter 3: Transformers: An Emotion Regulation Programme for People who have an Intellectual Disability

Abstract

Principles of the Treatment Programme

Selection Process

Staffing

Theoretical Framework

Content of Group Therapy Sessions

Relaxation

A Good Life

Chain Analysis

Emotion Recognition

Emotion Regulation

Relapse Prevention

Programme Delivery

Session Structure

Conclusion

Chapter 4: Research with People who have an Intellectual Disability

Study Design

Data Collection

Research Alliance

Informed Consent and Assent

Conclusions
Effects of the Intervention on Incident Reports

Discussion

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Overview of Findings

Limitations

Implications

Future Research

Personal Reflections

References

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for Welfare Guardians

Appendix 2: Consent form for Welfare Guardians

Appendix 3: Explanation of Information Sheet for Participants

Appendix 4: Information sheet for Participants

Appendix 5: Consent Form for Participants

Appendix 6: Example of Photo Stimuli Used in Recognition of Emotion in Faces Task

Appendix 7: Story Stimuli used in Recognition of Emotion in Stories Task

Appendix 8: Prompt Card for Emotion Recognition Tasks

Appendix 9: Task Instructions for Recognition of Facial Emotion Task

Appendix 10: Score Sheet for Emotion Recognition Tasks

Appendix 11: Task Instructions for Recognition of Emotion in Stories Task

Appendix 12: Information Sheet for Caregivers

Appendix 13: Consent Form for Caregivers
Appendix 14: Adapted Version of the Profile of Anger Coping Skills ............... 185
List of Tables

Table 1. Characteristics of selected studies addressing emotion regulation in people who have an intellectual disability (ID) .......................................................... 16

Table 2. Theoretical component of each session ............................................. 45

Table 3. Description of each emotion regulation strategy as provided to group members .......................................................................................................... 50

Table 4. Number of times each emotion word was selected in response to each target emotion for the pretreatment and posttreatment condition in the recognition of facial emotion task ................................................................. 82

Table 5. Number of times each emotion word was selected in response to each target emotion for the pretreatment and posttreatment condition in the recognition of emotion in stories task ..................................................................................... 83

Table 6. Definition and examples of behaviours as used to code incident reports .......................................................... 102

Table 7. Self-reported and caregiver-reported PACS scores, by strategy, for the group across the pretreatment and posttreatment phase ........................................ 105

Table 8. Self-reported and caregiver-reported PACS scores for each participant across all phases ........................................................................................................ 107

Table 9. The number of incidents, descriptive statistics, and SMDall for the group according to the category of behaviour pre- and posttreatment ........................................... 112
List of Figures

Figure 1. Number of correct responses in the recognition of facial expressions of emotion and emotion recognition in stories for each participant prior to, during, and following their involvement in an emotion regulation programme ................................ 79

Figure 2. Brinley plots comparing the average of correct responses pre- and posttreatment (excluding follow-up) for each participant on two tasks: the recognition of emotion in faces task (A) and recognition of emotion in stories task (B) ....................... 81

Figure 3. The total number of incidents for each participant and the group of participants by month ........................................................................................................ 109

Figure 4. The total number of incidents of each type of behaviour carried out by participants pre- and posttreatment ................................................................. 114