

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Exploring the impact of Child-Centered Play Therapy for Children Exhibiting Behavioral Problems: A Meta-Analysis¹.

Implications for Counselors:

“Interestingly, results examining externalizing behaviors compared to an active treatment resulted in the highest effect size obtained, demonstrating CCPT may be moderately more effective than the alternative treatment...”

The diagnostic criteria this definition may match –

- *Oppositional Defiant Disorder*
- *Childhood onset of Conduct Disorder*
- *Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder*
- *Autism Spectrum Disorders*

Reason for the study: “The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of play therapy on mitigating behavioral problems among children referred for treatment due to disruptive behaviors... To conduct a meta-analysis exploring the impact for CCPT on children’s disruptive behaviors.”

Methods:

- **Meta-analysis:** An examination of data from a number of independent studies of the same subject used to understand the overall conclusions regarding results from that research.
- Study qualities were determined based on agreed upon standards. Of the 23 studies examined, 10 were of higher quality (7+ of an 11 point scale, 11 being highest quality).

Results:

	“Diagnosis”	Overall Effect Size (<i>p</i>)
<i>CCPT vs. No Treatment</i>	Externalizing Behaviors	-0.34 (.00)
<i>CCPT vs. Alternative Treatment</i>	Externalizing Behaviors	-0.56 (.00)
<i>CCPT vs. No Treatment</i>	Overall Problem Behaviors	-0.48 (.00)
<i>CCPT vs. No Treatment</i>	Aggressive Behaviors	-0.26 (.10)

This study used + & - to indicate CCPT vs. “Other”. In this study when effect sizes are negative they indicate a positive change from CCPT.

Conclusion:

- Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) is an effective treatment for externalizing problem behaviors in children.
- There is a moderate effect size (0.56 or about 70% better) when comparing CCPT to alternative child therapy treatments (i.e. CBT, Parent Training, etc.).

¹ Parker, M. M., Hollenbaugh, K. M. H., Kelly, C. T. (2021). Exploring the impact of child-centered play therapy for children exhibiting behavioral problems: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 30(4), 259–271.