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BEHAVIORAL APPROACH TO INFANTILE ANOREXIA AND ITS OUTCOME ON MATERNAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

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Background: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of a behavioral approach for the treatment of toddlers with infantile anorexia; and the psychopathology and psychological functioning of their mothers before, during and after a structured treatment program.

Method: Three groups of 30 toddlers of either sex, aged 12 - 36 months (inclusive) were included to the study. The groups consisted of toddlers with 1- Infantile Anorexia 2- Picky Eating and 3- Healthy Eating who were referred for a psychiatric evaluation by pediatricians and gastroenterologists at the Department of Pediatrics, Istanbul School of Medicine. Groups were matched by age, sex, and socioeconomic status. Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Symptom Check List - 90 (SCL-90), and Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders (SCID-I) are used for assessing the maternal psychopathology of cases.

Discussion: In our sample, mothers of toddlers with IA and PE had more psychiatric symptoms than healthy group. The difference between IA and PE shows that the nutritional status of the child contributes to the psychopathological well-being of the mothers. There was a resolution of depression and anxiety during and after the treatment protocol. Then the psychological status seems to be not the reason but may be the result of the feeding problems. Also interventions that focus primarily on maternal psychopathology may not be effective as a behavioral treatment that focuses on both child and mother.