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Development of an Anxiety Management Package for Mothers with Children Preparing for University Entrance Exams

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study aimed to develop an anxiety reduction package for mothers with children preparing for university entrance exams.

Methodology: This research was qualitative in nature. In the first section, an exploration of the anxiety experienced by mothers with children preparing for university entrance exams was conducted using the thematic analysis method by Clarke and Braun (2006). In the second section, the anxiety management package was developed using the package development method by Yousefi and Golparvar (2023). The study population consisted of all mothers with children preparing for university entrance exams in the city of Shiraz during the 2022-2023 academic year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, and the number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, resulting in ten participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews.

Findings: The results of the interview analysis using the six-step method by Clarke and Braun (2019) indicated that the anxiety experienced by these mothers included two overarching categories: anxiety for the child (with organizing categories of outcome-related anxiety, competition-related anxiety, and process-related anxiety) and anxiety related to maternal performance (with organizing categories of maternal performance anxiety related to the entrance exam and anxiety regarding the inability to control the child). In the package development section, the hidden goal of this package was to reduce mothers' anxiety to enhance their children's academic performance through awareness and skill-building to manage maternal anxiety using positive psychology strategies (Frisch, 2006). This was achieved using the package development method by Yousefi and Golparvar (2023), where selected strategies from positive psychology were aligned with the extracted categories. The results of this integration led to an eight-session educational package, with objectives focused on reducing maternal anxiety and strategies derived from positive psychology. Finally, the educational package was validated through content validity evaluation by experts using the assessors' agreement coefficient, and the results indicated content validity.

Conclusion: Based on these findings, it can be concluded that this package is appropriate for managing anxiety in mothers of children preparing for university entrance exams.

Keywords: Anxiety Management, Mothers, University Entrance Exam, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis, Parental Involvement, Positive Psychology, Educational Package Development, Maternal Anxiety, Academic Performance.

1. Introduction

One of the major concerns of students, families, and educational authorities in Iran throughout the years of schooling, especially in high school, is the outcome of the university entrance exam (known as "Konkur"). Despite the increased capacity of universities in recent years and the reduced number of applicants for the national entrance exam in various fields, a fierce competition persists for securing admission to top-tier universities in the country and for gaining entry into specific fields of study. This competition is particularly intense in the field of Experimental Sciences. Excelling in this highly competitive environment and achieving the desired rank does not happen by chance; it requires the creation of special conditions. Preparing these conditions can incur significant financial costs for families, often leading to anxiety-inducing situations for parents. In fact, during the year of their child's entrance exam, parents must fulfill new responsibilities alongside their many existing duties, which can result in an overwhelming burden for this group of parents. Among them, mothers may experience even greater stress. Increased family stress and anxiety transform the household into an emotionally unbalanced unit, ultimately leading to poor decisions and inappropriate reactions, potentially preventing their child from achieving the best possible results in the entrance exam (Mirzaei et al., 2024). A correct understanding of this situation can lead to effective anxiety management.

Nevertheless, the role of parents in the academic success of their children cannot be overlooked. In reality, parents' active interest in school-related tasks plays a crucial role in a student's academic success, including participation in homework, school projects, and engagement in school-related matters, which sends a powerful message that academic life is of great importance. Mothers, in particular, can encourage good study habits, guide their children, and foster a positive attitude toward academic life. As students age and progress through different educational levels, this role shifts from hands-on teaching and step-by-step involvement to guiding in field selection, financial literacy, and life skills development.

Research shows that parents who are highly invested in their children's education are more likely to raise successful children. This is because a child's first educational institution is their home. Children learn the most from their parents and the environment in which they are raised (Boonk et al., 2018). Students cannot reach their full potential unless their parents actively participate in their education. Repeated

research has shown that positive parental involvement enhances student achievement, reduces bad behavior, improves attendance, and increases student satisfaction at school. Conversely, students whose parents are not involved in their education generally perform worse academically, encounter more difficulties at school, and feel less happy there (Muller, 2018).

Parental involvement from an early age has a significant impact on academic achievement, and this effect extends into adolescence and adulthood. Therefore, parents play a critical role in nurturing successful and productive future generations.

This group of parents follows clear guidelines that support their deep involvement in their child's academic life. They listen to their child, closely monitor their education and activities at school, and work closely with teachers (Waidler, 2014). They instill the importance of education from an early age, which helps their children develop self-awareness, independence, and cultural knowledge. This also broadens their horizons and assists them in securing better job opportunities. These parents strike a balance between being supportive and authoritative. Their primary method in this regard is dialogue and persuasion (Castro et al., 2015).

Throughout their child's academic and career journey, parents should help their children discover their skills, abilities, and interests while also learning about their strengths and weaknesses. They should assist their children in considering various career or academic options rather than solely focusing on socially acceptable or economically beneficial positions, enabling them to make informed decisions about employability, career advancement, and more (Vasquez et al., 2016). They continue to encourage their children to achieve their determined goals by providing ongoing support and resources (Idris et al., 2020).

Moreover, parents must engage in more interaction and reflection, possess the necessary listening skills to encourage and support their children without being domineering, and offer advice rather than make decisions for them (Choi, 2020).

Despite all of the above, parents, particularly mothers, can negatively impact their child's academic success because their concern for their child may turn into anxiety, leading to psychological control characterized by autonomy-control, where they completely disregard their child's thoughts and opinions. Alternatively, their psychological control may manifest as control-love, where emotional exchanges become conditional, reinforcing guilt in their child and reducing their self-esteem (Jang et al., 2021). This situation

is especially intensified for these parents and mothers during the final years of high school, leading them to excessively interfere in their child's academic affairs and exhibit anxiety-driven control. Additionally, maternal anxiety may manifest as social comparison of their child with other students, accompanied by humiliation or insult, which could create a sense of helplessness and despair for their child (Jang & Lee, 2021). This environment fosters disruption in peer relationships, disobedience, and intensified parental conflicts, diverting energy away from academic success and toward interpersonal conflicts and rumination. This situation during the university entrance exam year not only jeopardizes the student's success in their chosen field of study but also potentially causes irreversible negative effects on the student (Ogweani, 2020).

Overall, the university entrance exam is a stressful and anxiety-inducing situation for both students and parents, particularly for those aiming for certain fields of study. This condition is exacerbated for mothers who are heavily involved in their child's academic life, and if they fail to manage it, they may not only hinder their child's growth but also become an obstacle to their academic success. On the other hand, every year, some successful students have to deal with such mothers, and entrance exam counselors also experience the negative impact of these mothers on their children. However, no specific educational package has been designed to help these mothers, which could assist educational counselors in providing step-by-step support to this group of mothers. Therefore, this research addresses this important issue and, using qualitative research methods, aims to develop a special anxiety management package for mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam. It seeks to answer the following questions: What is the structure and content of the anxiety management package for mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam? And is this package content-valid?

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

Given that the focus of this research was to develop an educational anxiety management package specifically for mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam, the research methodology was qualitative. The first stage involved exploring the anxiety experienced by mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam using the reflexive thematic analysis method (Clarke & Braun, 2021). The second stage involved the package

development method by Yousefi and Golparvar (2023). The two stages of this research are outlined as follows:

Interviews were conducted with mothers who were suffering from anxiety related to their child's university entrance exam results. These interviews were analyzed inductively using the Clarke and Braun (2006) method.

After identifying the overarching categories of anxiety causes in mothers, the research team placed these categories within the educational package based on their priority in the package, along with educational strategies and anxiety management techniques developed by the research team.

The educational anxiety management package for mothers was prepared based on APA guidelines.

The package was validated through the calculation of assessors' agreement coefficients, and the results of this validation were reported in a separate article due to the extended length of the text.

In this research, the study environment included all mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam. The sample consisted of ten mothers, and selection continued until data saturation was reached. Data saturation occurred after five to six interviews, but the number of mothers was increased to ten. The inclusion criteria were: 1) long-term contract with an academic advisor, 2) at least a bachelor's degree, 3) a child with a score of 5000 or higher in periodic tests, 4) the child's first attempt at the university entrance exam, and 5) verbal complaints of high anxiety. The exclusion criteria were: 1) inability to answer questions, and 2) unwillingness to participate in the research.

In this study, the qualitative section involved extracting components of maternal anxiety causes using semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview process was as follows: before conducting the interviews, questions were developed based on the research literature and theoretical frameworks, as well as through consultation with supervisors and advisors, to discover factors and causes affecting the anxiety of mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam. After reaching a consensus on these questions, the final interview form was prepared, and the interview sessions were arranged based on the developed questions. These interviews included questions addressing important issues related to the concerns and distress of these mothers regarding their child's entrance exam. Additionally, exploratory questions such as "Could you explain more?" or "Is there anything else you would like to mention?" were used. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any additional information to add to ensure that no important details were overlooked. However, the questions

were not mandatory, and participants could choose not to answer any question they did not wish to. All interviews were recorded, and notes were taken in addition to the recordings. Sometimes, this note-taking occurred during and immediately after the interview. To ensure the accurate understanding of participants' statements, their remarks were often summarized and repeated back to them, asking for confirmation of the accuracy of the interpretation. The duration of the interviews ranged from 35 to 50 minutes. Semi-structured interviews began by focusing on topics or key points that covered the research topic.

Validation of the Research: To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, the following points were observed, based on the guidelines provided by Rose and Johnson (2020):

Usefulness: This indicates that the findings from qualitative research are useful and clarify the research under study. Since the goal of this research was to develop an anxiety management package for mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam, it can be beneficial and effective in raising awareness among these mothers.

Contextual Completeness: This suggests that the phenomenon under study was examined with consideration of its context. To achieve this in the present study, deep interviews were conducted to ensure that the voices of these mothers were heard, providing a more complete description of the context under investigation.

Researcher's Position: The researcher maintained an awareness of their role to avoid unconscious influence on the interpretation of interviews. In this research, the researcher sought to be aware of their position to avoid any bias in the selection of participants and the analysis and interpretation of interviews. Additionally, by consulting with another specialist during the analysis, efforts were made to prevent any unconscious influence on the interpretations and analyses.

Reporting Method: The style of reporting refers to a format that allows other specialists and users to easily understand the research results. In this study, efforts were made to present qualitative reports in tabular and graphical formats to facilitate comprehension.

Triangulation of Researchers: This means that different individuals conducted the coding and analysis of the data. In this study, interviews were coded by the researcher, and the data analysis was conducted by the researcher, the supervisor, and a specialist in qualitative research coding.

Research Implementation Procedure: After obtaining the necessary permissions and coordinating with relevant authorities, the researcher, under the guidance of the supervisor and advisor, selected participants based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and using purposive and boundary sampling (mothers with high anxiety). After distributing invitations, interviews were conducted at the counseling center.

Data Analysis and Package Development: To analyze the data, considering that the researchers aimed to identify the underlying constructs of maternal anxiety management, the thematic analysis method by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used, following these six steps:

1. Familiarization with the data.
2. Generating initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Preparing the report.

To begin the analysis, all interviews were read thoroughly to get an overall understanding of them.

During the second reading, a line-by-line coding was conducted, where each sentence in the interview received a code, derived from the researcher's and the supervisor's understanding. Therefore, it is not claimed that the codes exclusively emerged from the data. In the strategies suggested by Braun and Clarke (2021) for conducting thematic analysis, all data are coded, and the codes are gathered into increasingly abstract categories until they can represent a theme or pattern.

After the initial coding, the codes were merged into larger units with similar semantic content. This merging continued until only a few remained. The next step in the analysis was integrating the codes into themes. Then, the codes were transformed into themes or "patterns." In this study, a theme was defined as the smallest unit that could meaningfully represent the codes included within it. For example, a theme could represent an underlying concept that the codes encapsulated or could provide meaning to "similar" codes with divergent content that did not have direct referential similarity. Finally, the main themes were established.

3. Findings and Results

Table 1 shows the results of thematic analysis, which were derived from 103 initial codes. After removing irrelevant statements, 22 basic codes remained. These basic codes led to the identification of five organizing categories,

which were then grouped into two overarching categories related to the anxiety of mothers with children preparing for university entrance exams.

Table 1

Results of Thematic Analysis of Interviews Related to the Anxiety of Mothers with Children Preparing for University Entrance Exams

Basic Code	Organizing Code	Overarching Code
Anxiety from periodic evaluations by Ghalamchi	Result Anxiety	Anxiety for the Child
Anxiety from the child's score in periodic tests		
Anxiety from not increasing scores as planned		
Anxiety from uncertainty about proper budgeting of study time		
Anxiety from the appropriateness of task quantity in achieving results		
Anxiety from the quality of learning to achieve results	Process Anxiety	Anxiety for the Child
Anxiety from choosing the most effective advisor		
Anxiety about the advisor's behavior and feedback during sessions		
Anxiety about the choice of periodic tests		
Anxiety about the choice of books		
Anxiety about the choice of classes	Competition Anxiety	Anxiety for the Child
Anxiety from following competitors' status		
Anxiety from the greater success of competitors		
Anxiety from uncertainty about parenting choices related to the entrance exam		
Anxiety from uncertainty about the appropriateness of behaviors in relation to the child's condition		
Anxiety from uncertainty about the correctness of the path taken for the entrance exam	Anxiety about Maternal Performance related to the Entrance Exam	Anxiety related to Maternal Performance
Anxiety from uncertainty about the alignment of goals and aspirations with the child's characteristics		
Anxiety from the inability to manage the child's negative personality traits		
Anxiety from the inability to manage the child's interpersonal relationships		
Anxiety from the inability to manage parenting rules related to the entrance exam		
Anxiety from the inability to accept the conditions related to the child	Anxiety from the Perception of Inability to Manage the Child	Anxiety related to Maternal Performance

As shown in Table 2, the anxiety of mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam is composed of two overarching categories: (a) Anxiety related to the child, which consists of three organizing categories: 1) Result Anxiety, 2) Process Anxiety, and 3) Competition Anxiety; and (b) Anxiety related to maternal performance, which is composed of two organizing categories: 1) Anxiety about Maternal Performance related to the Entrance Exam and 2) Anxiety from the Perception of Inability to Manage the Child. Each of these categories is explained in detail below.

3.1. Anxiety Related to the Child

One of the overarching categories derived from the qualitative data is Anxiety related to the child. This category indicates that one of the general anxiety-inducing topics for mothers is directly related to their children. The three organizing codes associated with this category, along with their basic codes, are explained in detail below.

a-1: Organizing Code - Result Anxiety. This organizing code shows that mothers are highly concerned with achieving the desired outcome, which generates anxiety. The following basic codes were identified:

Anxiety from periodic evaluations: "Every time Mohammadreza has to take a Ghalamchi exam, I get very anxious."

Anxiety from the child's score in periodic tests: "Especially when Ali's results come, and I have to review his scores, I get very nervous and end up arguing a lot with him."

Anxiety from not increasing scores as planned: "I constantly think about whether the study budgeting is correct or not. This thought eats away at me. I am very sensitive about this topic. When he doesn't get the desired result, I wonder if there's a problem with his study budgeting."

Anxiety from the appropriateness of task quantity in achieving results: "His advisor assigns a certain number of practice tests for each subject, and sometimes he complains

about the excessive number, saying he can't complete them all."

Anxiety from the quality of learning to achieve results: "You know, until the day and hour of receiving the results, you don't know if your child has truly learned it or not. Well, if his score doesn't go up, I realize he hasn't learned, and he was just pretending."

a-2: Organizing Code - Process Anxiety. This organizing code within the overarching category of Anxiety for the child indicates that mothers have various negative thoughts regarding the appropriateness of the process leading to success in the entrance exam. The following basic codes were identified:

Anxiety from choosing the most effective advisor: "When we decided to choose an advisor, I did a lot of research. Everyone said something different. Some said don't get an advisor, some said you should, and others said choose someone who has recently taken the exam, while others advised against it."

Anxiety about the advisor's behavior and feedback during sessions: "Every time we went to the advisor, I was anxious about what he was going to say. Sometimes he was very harsh and belittling, which might be necessary, but it left both of us feeling terrible."

Anxiety about the choice of periodic tests: "Just the decision of which tests to take, whether to go with Sanjesh or Ghalamchi, whether they sell the questions or not, it's all really anxiety-inducing."

Anxiety about the choice of books: "The advisor chose the books for us, but because I'm anxious, I follow up on the topics and wonder if the advisor's recommendations are truly correct, but I don't say anything."

Anxiety about the choice of classes: "Deciding whether to attend entrance exam classes is another issue. When you decide to send them, which I think is necessary, the next problem arises: which class should they go to, should it be in-person or online, or should we buy offline educational packages? Even the advisors hold sessions with the teachers to decide, and you never know if it's just a money-making scheme or if it's really necessary."

a-3: Organizing Code - Competition Anxiety. Another organizing code within the overarching category of Anxiety for the child is Competition Anxiety, which shows that these mothers compare their children with other students or peers and compare their child's progress with others. The following basic codes were identified:

Anxiety from following competitors' status: "I believe you need to know who your child's competitors are, what

they are doing, and how they are progressing. I do this and always review and compare the top students of this year and previous years to see where they stand during this period."

Anxiety from the greater success of competitors: "When I see that his classmate, who is also very good at studying, is more successful, I'm happy, but I get extremely anxious and start questioning or asking him about what Mohammad Hassan has done and how he is doing."

3.2. *Anxiety Related to Maternal Performance*

The second overarching category derived from inductive analysis is Anxiety related to maternal performance, which shows that these mothers frequently evaluate their own maternal performance and have significant doubts about their abilities. This overarching category includes two organizing codes, which are explained in detail below along with their basic codes and examples:

b-1: Organizing Code - Anxiety about Maternal Performance related to the Entrance Exam. This organizing code indicates that these mothers continuously evaluate their actions and decisions related to their child's academic life, particularly concerning the entrance exam. The following basic codes were identified:

Anxiety from uncertainty about parenting choices related to the entrance exam: "I shouldn't have insisted that Bahar go to the gifted school because it caused her to lose confidence."

Anxiety from uncertainty about the appropriateness of behaviors in relation to the child's condition: "My child was very intelligent, and I didn't choose the right schools."

Anxiety from uncertainty about the correctness of the path taken for the entrance exam: "I don't know if the path we took, this advisor, these books, these classes, were the best choices or not. I know some of the things I did weren't right, maybe all of them."

Anxiety from uncertainty about the alignment of goals and aspirations with the child's characteristics: "I wanted to be accepted into medical school, but I couldn't, and now I really want my daughter to get in. I don't know if she can, and I keep asking myself if my efforts will bear fruit."

b-2: Organizing Code - Anxiety from the Perception of Inability to Manage the Child. The second organizing code in this overarching category shows that these mothers are highly interested in controlling their children but feel powerless to do so during the entrance exam year. The following basic codes were identified:

Anxiety from the inability to manage the child's negative personality traits: "I tell him to go to the study camp, that it's really good for him, but he doesn't listen and doesn't accept what I say. It really frustrates me."

Anxiety from the inability to manage the child's interpersonal relationships: "I enrolled him in a mixed-gender private class, and then the boys and girls started chatting, talking constantly, and creating a thousand and one problems."

Anxiety from the inability to manage parenting rules related to the entrance exam: "Because it's the entrance exam year and I've been accommodating him all the time, he thinks he can do whatever he wants. Sometimes he yells at his father, and at me too."

Anxiety from the inability to accept the conditions related to the child: "I do everything I can to improve his situation. I don't give up. I go to any advisor I need to, buy any book I need, and enroll him in any class I need to so that he can succeed."

In the second part of the study, the six-step method by Yousefi and Golparvar (2023) was used to develop the package, as described below.

Step 1: In this stage, the research team considered the overarching and organizing categories from the thematic analysis of mothers' anxiety regarding their children's entrance exams. Based on the content of the anxieties, both in terms of their child and their performance, the team decided to use awareness-raising and skill-building approaches to correct parental attitudes and improve satisfaction.

Step 2: In this stage, the research team considered five strategies for modifying existing mechanisms: changing attitudes, making objective changes, altering priorities, adjusting goals, and improving life satisfaction.

Step 3: In this stage, the research team aligned these strategies with the anxieties of mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam.

Step 4: In this stage, the research team determined the number of sessions, the time needed for each topic, and the prioritization of topics. It was decided to dedicate one session to understanding the conditions of the university entrance exam, one session to understanding anxiety and its consequences on the child, two sessions to making objective changes and adjusting goals, two sessions to changing attitudes and priorities, and one session to improving life satisfaction. In this stage, it was specified that each session should last 90 minutes.

Step 5: This step involved developing and preparing the content of the educational package according to APA guidelines (behavioral definitions, goal setting, strategies, and techniques for each session) under the supervision of advisors.

Step 6: In this stage, the process and content of the educational package were validated by academic advisors and clinical psychologists. Table 2 shows the content and process of the anxiety management training package for mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam.

Table 2

Summary of the Anxiety Management Training Package for Mothers with Children Preparing for the University Entrance Exam

Session	Objective, Content, Techniques, Assignment
Session 1	Objective: Understanding stress conditions in adolescence and the pressures on university-bound adolescents in relation to their peers. Content: Familiarizing mothers with the characteristics of adolescence in stressful and troubling conditions, and their reactions to difficult situations. Assignment: Monitoring the child's reactions to control.
Session 2	Objective: Understanding anxiety and its consequences on the child preparing for the university entrance exam and teaching proper parenting methods in stressful situations. Content: Mothers learn about the emotion of anxiety and its impact on parenting, and are introduced to proper parenting techniques in stressful situations.
Session 3	Objective: Teaching how to make objective changes and adjust goals to manage anxiety. Content: Mothers learn anxiety management through making objective changes and adjusting maternal goals and strategies related to these two objectives.
Session 4	Objective: Understanding anxiety management through goal setting and related strategies, and controlling maternal impulses to achieve maternal goals. Content: Mothers are introduced to anxiety management through proper goal setting and purposeful parenting during periods of stress and anxiety and learn to control maternal impulses in parenting.
Session 5	Objective: Understanding how to change attitudes to manage maternal anxiety. Content: Group members learn about the impact of positive and negative maternal attitudes on parenting and learn techniques for changing harmful attitudes.
Session 6	Objective: Understanding how to change priorities to manage anxiety. Content: Mothers understand the positive and negative effects of prioritization in parenting and learn how to change priorities to achieve better outcomes for their children.
Session 7	Objective: Understanding the skill of achieving satisfaction in parenting to manage anxiety. Content: Mothers learn about the role and importance of satisfaction in various aspects of life, particularly in parenting, and acquire related skills.
Session 8	Objective: Understanding the skill of achieving happiness to manage anxiety. Content: Mothers learn about the role and importance of maternal happiness on their children's performance and learn

As shown in Table 2, the educational content spans eight sessions, focusing on skill development and awareness to improve parenting for university-bound children to manage anxiety.

To validate this educational package, seven experts in counseling and psychology evaluated it in two areas: 1) the process of the package, including time, objectives, and topics for each session, and 2) the comprehensive content of each session. The educational content, along with an evaluation form, was provided to experts in the field, and they were asked to review the package regarding objectives, techniques, and time allocation. The CVR coefficient was then calculated, resulting in a $CVR = 0.98$, indicating a high level of assessor agreement.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to develop an anxiety management educational package specifically for mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam. To achieve this goal, the first part of the research qualitatively examined the nature of these mothers' anxieties, identifying two types: anxieties related to the child and anxieties related to maternal performance. Then, using the six-step method by Yousefi and Golparvar (2023), the package was developed and subsequently validated for content.

To date, no published research has addressed this specific topic, allowing for comparison or contrast with the results of other studies. However, many studies have examined the important role of mothers in their children's academic and career lives. For example, Wu et al. (2022) demonstrated that maternal anxiety about their children's education could predict academic burnout among them. Deng et al. (2022) showed that family and academic stress affects students' depression. Mulyadi et al. (2016) indicated that parental relationships indirectly affect students' academic stress. Deb et al. (2015) found a positive and significant relationship between parental academic pressure and academic stress experienced by high school students.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, the thematic analysis revealed that mothers of children preparing for the university entrance exam experience two types of anxiety: one related to their children, stemming from outcome-oriented thinking, comparing their children to other students, and doubts about the preparation process, and the other related to their performance as mothers, marked by doubts about their decisions and their future impact. They also felt

a strong inability to control their children, leading to a cycle of suffering from and inflicting control. The research team concluded that all these anxieties should be addressed within a framework of comprehensive strategies that could positively impact all aspects of anxiety. Therefore, among the various techniques available for reducing anxiety, the focus was placed on making objective changes, adjusting goals, changing priorities, altering perspectives, increasing life satisfaction, and enhancing happiness, with an introduction to the characteristics of university-bound adolescents and the impact of anxious mothers on these adolescents.

With the content and structure of the package determined, each session was set to last 90 minutes. The detailed content of the sessions was then provided to academic and clinical counselors, who were asked to evaluate both the structure and content. The results indicated that the package was content-valid. This content validity can be attributed to the precise and scientific process of conducting an exploratory study, following a step-by-step approach to package development, and designing the package based on behavioral definitions, general objectives, sub-objectives, strategies, and techniques.

The findings suggest that this package has suitable content and structure for reducing the anxiety of mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam. However, this study had limitations, such as not examining the anxieties of these mothers through the perspectives of their spouses or children. Including such perspectives could have produced more valid and accurate results. It is recommended that academic counselors use the content of this package in individual or group training sessions to help reduce the anxiety of mothers with children preparing for the university entrance exam.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

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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