

Effects of Contextual Schema Therapy on Interpersonal Sensitivity and Coping Self-Efficacy of Socially Anxious Female Adolescents

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Social anxiety disorder is a type of anxiety disorder characterized by a persistent fear of social situations and, as a result, avoidance of these situations, particularly when a person is performing a task or is among strangers. It is one of the most debilitating anxiety disorders, with approximately 7% annual prevalence and 14% lifetime prevalence. This disorder is more prevalent in females than in boys. Interpersonal sensitivity, which involves being acutely aware of the actions and emotions of others and being excessively sensitive to them, is one of the factors that contribute to social anxiety. Also influencing social anxiety is coping self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to cope with stressful events in a positive and effective manner. On this basis, the aim of this study was to determine the efficacy of contextual schema therapy on the interpersonal sensitivity and coping self-efficacy of female students with social anxiety.

Methodology

The current study employed a semi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests, a control group, and a one-month follow-up period. The statistical population included all female secondary school pupils aged 15 to 16 in the city of Borazjan in the academic year 2021-2022. Students performed the Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN), and 40 students with higher social anxiety scores than the other subjects were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (20 individuals in each group). Then, prior to the implementation of the intervention, the subjects completed the interpersonal sensitivity scale (ISS) and the coping self-efficacy scale (CSES). The experimental group then received eight 70-minute virtual training sessions, whereas the control group received no intervention. After the final session, a post-test was administered, and both groups were followed up on a month later. SPSS version 25 was used to conduct an analysis of variance with repeated measures on the data.

Findings

The F-value of the assumed sphericity test of interpersonal sensitivity was significant ($F=33.17$, $p<0.0001$), confirming the trend of the continued effectiveness of the educational intervention in relation to the reduction of interpersonal sensitivity. In addition, based on the significance of the F-value of the presumed sphericity test of the interaction between interpersonal sensitivity and group ($p<0.0001$), the trend of changes in the experimental group and control group differed over time. In addition, the F-value of the assumed sphericity test of coping self-efficacy was significant ($F=12.69$, $p<0.0001$), confirming the trend of the continued efficacy of the educational intervention in increasing coping self-efficacy. In addition, based on the significance of the F-value of the presumed sphericity test of the interaction between coping self-efficacy and group ($p<0.0001$), the trend of changes in the experimental group and the control group differed over time. Overall, the results demonstrated that contextual schema therapy is effective in reducing interpersonal sensitivity and increasing coping self-efficacy, and that this effect is long-lasting ($p<0.01$).

Conclusion

Due to the importance of childhood and adolescence and the fact that many mental disorders develop during this time, it is recommended that the education department and its affiliated institutions plan for the education of children and adolescents using the contextual therapy schema. These trainings can be utilized as preventative measures against mental disorders or as early treatment before the onset of chronic mental illness. With these timely actions, it is possible to provide children and adolescents with physical and mental health and improve their education, careers, and ultimately their entire lives.

Keywords: Contextual Therapy Schema, Coping Self-Efficacy, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Social Anxiety.