

## **The Efficacy of Group-Based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Cognitive Flexibility and Self-Esteem in Women Who Have Experienced the Trauma of Infidelity**

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### **Extended Abstract**

#### **Aim**

A number of studies have found an increase in the rate rate of adultery in recent decades. In addition, research indicates that men are more likely to indulge in extramarital relationships than women. Infidelity is a severe crisis that destroys the stability and strength of committed relationships, and it is frequently one of the most challenging cases for couples' therapists to treat. The purpose of the present study was to determine the efficacy of group-based acceptance and commitment therapy on cognitive flexibility and self-esteem among women who had experienced the trauma of infidelity.

#### **Method**

The research method was experimental, and the design was quasi-experimental, utilizing pre- and post-test with a control group. In 2017, the statistical population included women in Tehran, Iran who had experienced the trauma of infidelity and sought help from counseling centers and family courts. On the basis of the study's criteria, thirty couples were selected using a method of purposive sampling and randomly assigned to experimental (n=15) and control groups (n=15). This study's inclusion criteria included a history of infidelity, a minimum of a secondary school education, the absence of a specific disease or drug use, a lack of a history of psychiatric drug use or mental disorders, a willingness to participate in the study and receive counseling, and the capacity to attend eight consecutive counseling sessions. This study's inclusion criteria included more than two absences during interventional sessions, a refusal to participate in the research, and frequent session delays. The experimental group participated in eight 90-minute sessions of acceptance and commitment therapy, while the control group received no training. The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI, Dennis, & Vander Wal, 2010) and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) were administered to all participants. SPSS 22 software was used to conduct a multivariate analysis of covariance on the data.

#### **Findings**

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) results indicated that group-based acceptance and commitment therapy significantly increased the average post-test scores of self-esteem in the experimental group ( $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the average post-test scores for cognitive flexibility in the experimental group improved significantly owing to group-based acceptance and commitment therapy ( $p < 0.05$ ).

#### **Discussion**

Based on the findings, family counselors and therapists can use acceptance and commitment therapy to enhance self-esteem and cognitive flexibility in women who have experienced the trauma of infidelity. In other words, ACT can assist these women in coping with this distressing and traumatic occurrence. In addition, it can have a positive effect on their quality of life, leading to their mental and physical well-being. Therefore, it is suggested that those who provide services to women affected by marital infidelity attempt to implement these interventions in order to improve these women's lives. In addition, examining the function of cultural differences among women in various societies will aid in gaining a deeper comprehension of their experiences. Therefore, future research should focus on other ethnicities and populations to provide a more comprehensive body of evidence in this discipline.

**Keywords:** Acceptance, Cognitive Flexibility, Commitment, Infidelity, Self-Esteem.