

## **Comparison of the Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) on Adolescents' Emotional Experiences of Parental Divorce**

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### **Extended Abstract**

#### **Aim**

This study sought to compare the efficacy of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy and emotion-focused therapy on the emotional experiences of adolescents aged 15 to 18 years after their parents' divorce.

#### **Method**

**Method:** We adopted a quasi-experimental, pre- and post test control group design with a three-month follow-up. In 2020-2021, the sample population consisted of all male adolescents aged 15 to 18 who had experienced parental divorce. Sampling Method was purposive. For this procedure, we consulted the counseling centers covered by the Tasmim Divorce Reduction System, which is affiliated with the State Welfare Organization and Iran's Ministry of Justice (Taraz Center, Mehr-e Jonub Center, Tabesh Center, Sadra Center, and the Family Care Center of the State Welfare Organization of Iran), as well as the counseling centers of School Districts 1 and 2 of the city of Bandar Abbas. In total, 88 adolescents met the inclusion criteria, which included at least one year since parental divorce, the age range of 15 to 18 years, no severe psychological disorders, no dropouts, no addictions to natural or synthetic drugs, and a Painful Emotional Experiences Scale and Emotional Experiences of Parental Divorce (EPPD) Scale score one standard deviation above the mean. Exclusion criteria for the study included absence from more than two counseling sessions and refusal to continue therapy. In this stage, 51 adolescents agreed to participate in the study. First, 51 adolescents participated in a screening exam. The 17 participants were then randomly assigned to one of three groups: emotion-focused therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, or a control group. The interventions commenced in the middle of September 2020 and continued until the middle of May 2021. After the interventions were concluded, participants were given a post-test. Three months later, at the end of August 2021, a subsequent test was administered. Each intervention group participant received 12 sessions of individual therapy. Two cases in the control group and one participant per intervention group were lost to sample attrition. The final samples consisted of the scores of 47 participants. The EPPD was utilized to collect data. In SPSS-23, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Box's test, analysis of variance with repeated measures, and Bonferroni test) were used to analyze the data.

#### **Findings**

The participants' mean age was  $16.68 \pm 1.06$  years. The average age of the children at the time of parental divorce was  $13.21 \pm 1.10$  years. 33 participants (70.2%) were in the custody of their father, while 14 participants (29.8%) were in the custody of their mother. Time had a significant effect on all of the EPPD's dimensions, including simple painful emotions, complex painful emotions, emotional needs, and emotional development. There was a significant difference between the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, as indicated by the time effect.

Comparing the post-test and follow-up phases of emotion-focused therapy and trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy with the control group revealed that these interventions were more effective. Comparing the methods of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy and emotion-focused therapy revealed that, during the posttest phase, emotion-focused therapy was more effective in terms of basic emotions, painful emotions, and emotional development. In contrast, the comparison of the means of the two regimens during the follow-up phase revealed no significant differences.

#### **Discussion**

Overall, the results indicated that trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy and emotion-focused therapy had no advantage over one another in reducing the agonizing emotions caused by parental divorce and fostering the emotional development of adolescents over the long term. In contrast, these approaches utilized distinct mechanisms of efficacy. Focusing on experiencing primary emotions, focusing on the treatment relationship, and focusing on the dimensions of attachment were the characteristics of emotion-focused therapy that decreased the participants' painful emotions and enhanced their emotional development. In a secure therapeutic environment, clients were able to develop healing and therapeutic components such as emotional awareness and agency by experiencing painful emotions. Participants in trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy described the traumatic experience of parental divorce in detail and confronted the associated painful thoughts and emotions, thereby learning to exert greater control over their trauma narrative. This helped them modify dysfunctional cognitions and develop a new sense of self, which facilitated emotional development after parental divorce.

**Keywords:** Emotional Experiences, Emotion-Focused Therapy, Parental Divorce, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.