

Effectiveness of Compassion-Focused Therapy on Treatment Adherence and Perceived Stress in Irritable Bowel Syndrome Patients

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Irritable bowel syndrome is the most frequently diagnosed disease of the digestive system and accounts for 25% to 50% of referrals to gastroenterologists. Irritable bowel syndrome is primarily a disorder of the large intestine. In addition to physical pain in the abdomen and intestines, patients with irritable bowel syndrome also experience negative psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and stress. This process renders patients with irritable bowel syndrome susceptible to psychological and emotional harm and long-term physiological complications. Despite the fact that the pain produced by irritable bowel syndrome is so intense that it affects the quality of life and causes stress in affected individuals, this is the case. Accordingly, the present study investigated the effectiveness of compassion-focused therapy on treatment adherence and perceived stress in patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Methodology

It was a quasi-experimental study consisting of a pre-test, a post-test, a control group, and a two-month follow-up period. In 2019, the statistical population of the present study included IBS patients referred to Bandarabbas therapy centers and gastroenterologists. Using the available sampling technique, 32 IBS patients were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. During two and a half months, the experimental group received ten 75-minute sessions of compassion-focused therapy. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Adherence to Treatment Questionnaire (ATQ) were among the questionnaires utilized. The data were analyzed using statistical software version 23 and repeated-measurement ANOVA and Bonferroni follow-up tests.

Findings

The results showed that compassion-focused therapy has a significant effect on IBS patients' treatment adherence and perceived stress ($P < 0.001$). In this way, this treatment has been able to increase treatment adherence and decrease patients' perceptions of stress. In addition, the results demonstrated that the effect of compassion-focused therapy remained stable during the two-month follow-up.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the present study, compassion-focused therapy can be used as an effective therapy to increase treatment adherence and decrease perceived stress in IBS patients by employing techniques such as increasing positive experiences, training compassion expression, and identifying incorrect evaluations. With the assistance of compassion-based therapy, patients with irritable bowel syndrome can break the cycle of self-criticism and high expectations through the use of mindfulness, problem-solving skills, and a new and compassionate view of themselves so as to make attaining them easier and less annoying. In this way, it is anticipated that patients with irritable bowel syndrome who receive compassionate treatment will experience a reduction in perceived stress.

Keywords: Adherence to Therapy, Compassion-Focused Therapy, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Perceived Stress.