



The University of Tehran Press

Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Psychotherapy on the Perceived Stress and Psychological Wellbeing in the Patients with Corona Anxiety in the Pandemic Period

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Extended Abstract

Aim

The COVID-19 virus is a rapidly spreading disease caused by a novel virus called the coronavirus. Common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties. In severe cases, this infection can lead to pneumonia, severe respiratory problems, kidney failure, and even death (Repullo, 2021). Since the outbreak of this disease, the world has witnessed an upward trend in the number of patients and high mortality rates due to its unknown nature and the lack of information and medical resources (Asli Azad, Farhadi, and Khaki, 2021). Research indicates that many healthcare workers are at risk of infection due to frequent and close contact with patients, resulting in illness and sometimes death, which has intensified public panic (Law, Leung, & Xu, 2020). This epidemic is a significant social event affecting not only regions but entire countries and the world, necessitating attention to its psychological effects on society (Asli Azad, Khaki, & Farhadi, 2021).

Due to the widespread impact of the COVID-19 virus on physiological functions and its rapid spread, a great deal of stress is observed among the infected, those who have recovered, and healthy individuals in society (Ye et al., 2020). Moreover, the occurrence of COVID-19-related anxiety and the subsequent stress in these individuals lead to a decrease in mental health indicators such as psychological well-being (Ejiri et al., 2021). Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the efficacy of mindfulness-based psychotherapy on perceived stress and psychological well-being in patients with COVID-19-related anxiety during the pandemic period.

Methodology

This was a quasi-experimental study with a pretest-posttest control group design and a three-month follow-up period. The statistical population included individuals with COVID-19-related anxiety who sought telephone counseling in Isfahan in 2021. Thirty-three participants (19 women and 14 men) were purposefully selected and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received mindfulness-based psychotherapy over two months. The applied questionnaires included the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), the Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire (PWBQ) (Ryff, 1980 cited by Bayani et al., 2008), and the Corona Disease Anxiety Scale (CDAS) (Alipour et al., 2020). Data were analyzed using a mixed ANOVA method via SPSS23 software.

Findings

The results showed that mindfulness-based psychotherapy was effective in reducing perceived stress ($F=44.99$; $\eta^2=0.59$; $P<0.001$) and improving psychological well-being ($F=66.28$; $\eta^2=0.68$; $P<0.001$)

in patients with COVID-19-related anxiety. This intervention decreased the average scores of perceived stress and increased the psychological well-being scores of those suffering from COVID-19-related anxiety. These results remained stable during the follow-up phase.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that mindfulness-based psychotherapy can effectively reduce perceived stress and improve psychological well-being in patients with COVID-19-related anxiety. Techniques such as adopting a mindful attitude, engaging in mindful activities, addressing problematic feelings and emotions, and practicing breathing exercises were employed. Mindfulness teaches individuals cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral strategies that reduce negative emotions and thoughts by focusing attention on positive aspects. This process fosters a new perspective and more pleasant thoughts and emotions. Consequently, this intervention method helps individuals suffering from COVID-19-related anxiety to reduce cognitive errors such as catastrophizing and overgeneralization, which contribute to stress perception. It enhances their ability to cope with the signs and symptoms of COVID-19-related anxiety, manage stressful events more effectively, and experience less stress.

Keywords: Corona Anxiety, Mindfulness-Based Psychotherapy, Perceived Stress, Psychological Wellbeing.

Ethical Considerations

To adhere to research ethics, consent was obtained from individuals to participate in the intervention program, and they were informed of all stages of the intervention. After the completion of the research process, a call was made to the control group to invite them to receive the intervention. Eight participants from the control group received the intervention.

Acknowledgements and Financial Support

This article is derived from a PhD dissertation. Appreciation is extended to all participants in the research, their families, and the officials of the counseling centers who fully cooperated in the execution of the research. No governmental or private organization provided financial support for this research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have reported no conflicts of interest in this research.

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Cite this article: Bakhshandeh Amnieh, T., Reisi, Z., Ranjbarkohan, Z., & Khoshakhlagh, H. (2024). Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Psychotherapy on the Perceived Stress and Psychological Wellbeing in the Patients with Corona Anxiety in the Pandemic Period. *Journal of Applied Psychological Research*, 15(1), 189-206. doi: 10.22059/japr.2024.335965.644140.



Publisher: University of Tehran Press

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/japr.2024.335965.644140>
