



The University of Tehran Press

Comparison of the Effectiveness of Group Therapies based on Acceptance and Commitment and Schema on Coping Style Avoidance and Body Mass Index in Obese and Overweight People with Emotional Eating

Iman Najjar Kakhaki¹ , Maryam Kalhorniya Golkar^{2*} , Atefeh Nezhad Mohammad Nameghi³ ,
Fatemeh Mohammadi Shiri Mahaleh⁴ , Majid Valizadeh⁵ 

1. Department of Health Psychology, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran. Email: iman.najjar@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran. Email: ma.kalhornia@iau.ac.ir
3. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran. Email: nezhadmohamad@kia.ac.ir
4. Clinical Cares and Health Promotion Research Center, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran. Email: fatemeh.mohammadi@kia.ac.ir
5. Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Institute, School of Medicine, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran. Email: valizadeh@edocrine.ac.ir

Extended Abstract

Aim

Eating disorders are multifactorial problems caused by personal, environmental, and biological factors (Kachooei et al., 2016). Avoidant distraction is associated with a disturbed attitude towards eating and nutrient requirements in adults, particularly in young women and women with eating disorders (Czaja et al., 2009). Among the effective treatments for obese individuals who eat in response to their thoughts and feelings is acceptance and commitment group therapy (Nourian, Aqaei & Ghorbani, 2016). Considering the avoidance behaviors of people with eating disorders, another treatment that can be effective is group schema therapy (Mahmoudian Dastnaji et al., 2018). Accordingly, the present study was conducted to compare the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment group therapy and group schema therapy in addressing avoidance coping in obese and overweight individuals suffering from emotional eating.

Methodology

The current research was a quasi-experimental study with a pretest-posttest control group design. The research population comprised all men and women aged 21 to 50 who visited nutrition and obesity clinics in Tehran during the summer and fall of 2020. The research sample included 45 obese individuals suffering from emotional eating, selected through convenience sampling from Mehrdadi and Behpouyan nutrition and obesity clinics. The selected subjects were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group, each containing 15 participants. The experimental groups underwent acceptance and commitment group therapy (Lillis et al., 2014) for 12 sessions of 90 minutes each (once a week) and group schema therapy (Mahmoudian Dastnaji et al., 2018) for 12 sessions of 90 minutes each (once a week), while the control group did not receive any treatment.

The inclusion criteria were: age between 21 and 50 years, a body mass index over 25, a minimum score of 3.25 on the emotional eating subscale, and having at least a high school diploma. Exclusion criteria included: being breastfeeding or pregnant, suffering from eating disorders or serious medical problems such as type 1 diabetes or thyroid issues, substance abuse, current use of antipsychotic medications or any drugs affecting weight, and having undergone surgery for obesity. Before and after the weekly sessions, at the posttest stage, the experimental and control groups completed the Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ) (Van Strien et al., 1986) and the General and Specific

Avoidance Questionnaire (GASQ) (Stemmet et al., 2015), and their body mass index was measured and recorded. Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance and Bonferroni's post hoc test with SPSS-24. The significance level was set at 0.05.

Findings

The results demonstrated that, based on the average scores of the avoidance coping style in people suffering from obesity and emotional overeating, both acceptance and commitment group therapy and group schema therapy caused a decrease in avoidance coping style in the experimental groups compared to the control group. There was no significant difference between the two experimental groups in terms of avoidance coping style scores, indicating that both therapies are relatively equivalent in their effectiveness in reducing avoidance coping. Furthermore, based on the average body mass index (BMI) of the participants, both therapies reduced the BMI of the experimental groups compared to the control group. No significant difference was found between the two experimental groups in terms of BMI, suggesting that both therapies are relatively equivalent in their effectiveness in reducing BMI.

Conclusion

The results of the present study revealed that there is no significant difference between acceptance and commitment group therapy and group schema therapy in terms of effectiveness in reducing avoidance coping style among obese and overweight individuals suffering from emotional eating. Additionally, the results indicated that there is no significant difference between the two therapies in terms of their effectiveness in reducing BMI in this population.

Keywords: Avoidance Coping Style, Emotional Eating, Group Therapy Based on Acceptance and Commitment, Group Therapy Based on Schema.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted after receiving approval from the Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Karaj Branch, under the number IR.IAU.K.REC.1399.076. To adhere to ethical considerations in this research, participants' voluntary and optional participation, the explanation of the rights and responsibilities of both parties, the confidentiality of information obtained during the study, and the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time were all taken into account.

Acknowledgments and Financial Support

This study is part of the doctoral dissertation of one of the authors in the field of psychology at Islamic Azad University, Karaj Branch, and was conducted without any financial assistance from any institution or organization. The authors express their gratitude to the esteemed managers of the collaborating clinics and the participants in this study.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this article.

References

- Czaja, J., Rief, W., & Hilbert, A. (2009). Emotion regulation and binge eating in children. *The International journal of eating disorders*, 42(4), 356–362. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.20630>
- Kachooei, M., Moradi, A., Kazemi, A. S., & Ghanbari, Z. (2016). The discriminative role of emotion regulation and impulsivity in different unhealthy eating patterns. *Feyz Medical Sciences Journal*, 20 (4), 383-390. <http://feyz.kaums.ac.ir/article-1-3141-en.html> (in Persian)
- Lillis, J., Dahl, J., & Weineland, S.M. (2014). *The diet trap: Feed your psychological needs and end the weight loss struggle using acceptance and commitment therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Mahmoudian Dastnaji, T., Neshatdost H, Amiri S & Aanshaee G. (2018). Comparing the effectiveness of schema therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy on eating disorder beliefs in anorexia and bulimia nervosa patients with regard to parental bonding. *Clinical Psychology and Personality*, 16(1), 33-48. https://bjcp.ir/browse.php?a_id=1107&sid=1&slc_lang=en (in Persian)

- Nourian, L., Aghaei, A., & Ghorbani, M. (2017). Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Emotional Eating among Obese Women. *Knowledge & Research in Applied Psychology*, 16(2), 15-23. https://jsr-p.isfahan.iau.ir/article_533962.html?lang=en (in Persian)
- Stemmet, L., Roger, D., Kuntz, J., & Borrill, J. (2015). General and specific avoidance: The development and concurrent validation of a new measure of avoidance coping. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 31(3), 222–230. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000220>
- Van Strien, T., Frijters, J. E., Bergers, G. P. & Defares, P. B. (1986). The Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ) for assessment of restrained, emotional, and external eating behavior. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 5(2), 295–315. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-108X\(198602\)5:2<295::AID-EAT2260050209>3.0.CO;2-T](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-108X(198602)5:2<295::AID-EAT2260050209>3.0.CO;2-T)

Cite this article: Najar Kakhaki, I., Kalhorniya Golkar, M., Nezhad Mohammad Nameghi, A., & Mohammadi Shiri Mahaleh, F., & Valizadeh, M. (2024). Comparison of the Effectiveness of Group Therapies based on Acceptance and Commitment and Schema on Coping Style Avoidance and Body Mass Index in Obese and Overweight People with Emotional Eating. *Journal of Applied Psychological Research*, 15(2), 357-371. doi: 10.22059/japr.2023.323269.643831.



Publisher: University of Tehran Press
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/japr.2023.323269.643831>

© The Author(s).
