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The Efficacy of Schema Therapy on Rumination, Depression, and Personality Function of Women with Bulimia Nervosa

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Understanding the complex relationship between psychological processes and the manifestation of eating disorders has been a major focus of both research and clinical practice (American Psychiatric Association, 2015). Among these disorders, bulimia nervosa presents unique challenges, characterized by a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral difficulties (Silén & Keski-Rahkonen, 2022). Its key factors such as rumination, depression, and personality functioning play a significant role in affecting individuals' overall well-being and quality of life (Van Eeden et al., 2021). In response to these challenges, researchers have been exploring innovative therapeutic approaches to address the multifaceted nature of bulimia nervosa (Birmachou et al., 2021). Schema therapy, in particular, has gained attention for its potential to not only reduce symptoms but also enhance positive psychological attributes (Zheng et al., 2023). This study aims to assess the effectiveness of schema therapy as an intervention for women diagnosed with bulimia nervosa, with a specific focus on its impact on rumination, depression, and personality functioning. By examining these aspects, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion of evidence-based interventions for eating disorders and provide valuable insights into the potential of schema therapy to achieve comprehensive therapeutic outcomes.

Methodology

This research employed a quasi-experimental design, using a pre-test-post-test model with a control group. The study population consisted of individuals referred to psychological and counseling clinics in Tehran's 6th and 8th districts in 2023. A total of 30 women diagnosed with bulimia nervosa were selected using convenience sampling from a psychology center. These participants were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=15) and a control group (n=15) (Faul et al., 2007). Throughout the study, ethical considerations such as participant confidentiality and the exclusive use of their information for research purposes were strictly observed. Participants completed questionnaires on rumination (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991), the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1996), and personality functioning (Bender et al., 2014) after providing full consent. The experimental group then participated in ten 90-minute schema therapy sessions (Young et al., 2006), following which participants completed the questionnaires again. Data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of covariance in SPSS-24. Ethical guidelines, including those from the National

Ethics Committee and COPE regulations, were adhered to throughout the study to ensure the respectful and responsible treatment of participants.

Findings

The results showed that schema therapy significantly reduced rumination ($P < 0.001$, $F = 23.51$) and depression ($P < 0.001$, $F = 50.04$), while increasing intimacy ($P < 0.001$, $F = 47.16$), empathy ($P < 0.001$, $F = 41.83$), self-direction ($P < 0.001$, $F = 30.04$), and identity ($P < 0.001$, $F = 32.77$) in women with bulimia nervosa. These findings provide strong evidence for the efficacy of schema therapy in addressing the cognitive and emotional challenges associated with bulimia nervosa. The significant reductions in rumination and depression highlight the therapeutic benefits of schema therapy, while the increases in intimacy, empathy, self-direction, and identity demonstrate its positive impact on interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and sense of purpose.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the effectiveness of schema therapy in reducing psychological distress and improving personality functioning in women with bulimia nervosa. The significant reductions in rumination and depression, along with improvements in intimacy, empathy, self-direction, and identity, point to the comprehensive positive effects of schema therapy across multiple dimensions of psychological health. These results highlight the potential of schema therapy as a holistic intervention for the complex challenges associated with bulimia nervosa, offering new avenues for the development of targeted treatments that can greatly enhance the quality of life for individuals affected by this disorder. However, further research is needed to investigate the long-term sustainability and broader applicability of these findings, potentially leading to more refined and effective therapeutic strategies for this population.

Keywords: Bulimia Nervosa, Depression, Personality Function, Rumination, Schema Therapy.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, participants were assured that the research data would be analyzed collectively. The ethical principles outlined by the National Ethics Committee and COPE guidelines were strictly adhered to in the writing of this article.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the conduct of this research, and the results have been reported transparently and without bias.

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