

Efficacy of Group Schema Therapy on Difficulty in Emotion Regulations and Aggression in Adolescent Girls

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was the effectiveness of schema therapy on the difficulty in emotion regulation and aggression in adolescent girl students. The research method was Quasi-experimental with pre-test, post-test, and two-month follow-up with the control group. The statistical population of this study included all-female high school students in the year 2019-2020. By using the purposive sampling method, 40 students were selected, randomly assigned to the experimental and the control group (20 people each). Emotion Difficulty Regulation Questionnaire and Aggression Questionnaire were used in three steps. The experimental group received Schema Therapy, 8 sessions 90 minutes. Data were analyzed using repeated-measures ANOVA. The results showed that schema therapy was effective in reducing all subscales of difficulty in regulating emotion and aggression, but was significantly reduced in the follow-up phase. In fact, schema therapy can be used as a means of reducing the difficulty in cognitive regulation and aggression in the adolescent.

Keywords: Adolescence, aggression, difficulty in emotion regulation, schema therapy

Introduction

The intervention that has been investigated in the present study for reducing difficulty in cognitive regulation and aggression in adolescent girl students is schema therapy. Schemas play an important role in perpetuating and exacerbating chronic psychological problems, and changing or modifying maladaptive schemas in the psychotherapy process can help improve people's living conditions (Taylor et al., 2017). Schema therapy has been effective in previous studies, including the reduction of aggression in adolescents (Hemmati Sabet et al., 2016); Reducing the difficulty of regulating the excitement of runaway teenage girls (Mahdavi, et al., 2020); Improving emotional regulation (Hajikhaniyan et al., 2020). Considering that it is necessary to study psychological problems and characteristics in adolescence and according to the above, this study was performed to investigate the effectiveness of schema therapy methods on the difficulty of emotion regulation and aggression in adolescent girls and test the following hypotheses:

- Schema therapy is effective on difficulty in cognitive regulation of adolescent girls and after 2 months, the effect lasts
- Schema therapy is effective on aggression in adolescent girls and after 2 months, the effect lasts

Method

The present study was quasi-experimental in terms of the method with pre-test, post-test, and two-month follow-up with the control group. The statistical population of the study included all-female high school students in Tehran. A high school was selected for multi-stage cluster sampling. Then, 40 students from that school were selected by purposive sampling and after matching, they were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups, 20 people in each group. The criterion for inclusion in the study was the lack of a history of serious medical and psychiatric illnesses that required medication, which was determined with the help of a school counselor and review of students' files. Data obtained in the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages were analyzed using descriptive statistics and repeated measures ANOVA. The tools were:

Emotion Regulation Difficulty Questionnaire (Gertz, et al., 2004): The developers calculated the convergent validity of the instrument and reported its reliability by Cronbach's alpha method of 0.93. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha value was 0.86.

Aggression questionnaire (Zahedifar, et al., 2000): The validity of the questionnaire was reported by the constructors in girls and boys as 0.70 and 0.79, respectively, and the reliability was reported as 0.86 and 0.89, respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha value was 0.83.

Schema Therapy Group Sessions: weekly sessions were performed on the experimental group in 8 sessions of 90 minutes (Young, et al., 2003).

Results

According to the results, after describing the data, Mauchly's Test statistic was significant for some variables. Therefore, the spherical default is not observed for these variables. For others the Green House Geisser test was used. The results of the analysis of variance showed that the interactive effect of the step with the group was significant for all variables. There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups during the three stages. Also, the square of Eta for all variables was more than 0.1, which showed that the difference between the two groups was significant. The results of comparing the mean of the experimental and control groups in three stages showed that in all variables, the difference between the mean of the

experimental and control groups in the pre-test stage was not significant but it is significant in post-test and follow-up.

The results of comparing the mean of different stages in the experimental and control groups showed that in the control group no significant change was observed between the different stages. The results for the emotion regulation difficulty showed that in the experimental group, the mean score of all subscales and the total score, in the post-test stage were significantly reduced compared to the pre-test stage. This showed that schema therapy is effective in the difficulty of emotion regulation. Also, due to the significant increase in the mean of emotion regulation difficulty and its subscales, in the follow-up stage compared to the post-test, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the schema therapy was not maintained two months after treatment.

Table 1. Results of analysis of variance test to examine the differences between groups in variables

Variable	Sources	SS	df	MS	F	sig	Eta
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	group	8313.45	1	8313.45	73.46	0.0001	0.67
	level	5920.96	2	2960.48	398.83	0.0001	0.91
	level interaction with the group	4538.08	2	2269.04	305.68	0.0001	0.89
Aggression	group	1426.17	1	1426.17	11.88	0.0001	0.25
	level	1183.98	1.63	725.11	129.74	0.0001	0.78
	level interaction with the group	1124.59	1.63	688.74	123.23	0.0001	0.77

The results for the aggression showed that in the experimental group, the mean score of all subscales and the total score in the post-test stage compared to the pre-test stage decreased significantly. This showed that schema therapy is effective in aggression. Also, due to the significant increase in the mean of aggression scores and its subscales in the follow-up stage compared to the post-test, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the schema therapy treatment was not maintained two months after treatment.

Table 2. Results of comparison of the mean of pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages in two groups

Variable	levels	experimental Group			Control Group		
		Mean difference	Std. Error	sig	Mean difference	Std. Error	sig
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	Pre-test-post-test	-31.90	0.98	0.0001	-2.17	1.00	0.11
	Pre-test-follow-up	-25	0.85	0.0001	-1.56	0.87	0.24
	Post-test-follow-up	6.90	0.82	0.0001	0.61	0.85	1
Aggression	Pre-test-post-test	-14.84	0.76	0.0001	-0.33	0.79	1
	Pre-test-follow-up	-12.11	0.78	0.0001	0.11	0.80	1
	Post-test-follow-up	2.74	0.50	0.0001	0.44	0.52	1

Discussion and conclusion

Consistent with previous findings, it can be said that schema therapy by replacing adaptive emotional management strategies to deal with life problems, reduce chronic interpersonal problems and emotional instability, and thus activate emotional regulation in the individual. The use of adaptive coping strategies is associated with the development of psychological capacity and problem-solving skills, and this process improves the difficulty in regulating their emotions. This treatment reduces aggression in adolescents by working on the multidimensional, cognitive, experimental, and behavioral dimensions of the individual. Interpretation of results should be done in the context of its limitations. The study population was adolescent girls in Tehran, so to generalize the results to other populations and other cultures, especially in adolescent boys, it is necessary to be careful. It is recommended that school counselors become familiar with schema therapy and use it in schools to reduce the difficulty of regulating emotion and aggression.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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