

The Efficacy of Psychodrama on Emotional-Cognitive Regulation and Self-harm in Soldiers with Traits or Borderline Personality Disorders

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effect of psychodrama on emotional–cognitive regulation and self-harm in soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorder. The research was a semi-experimental method with pre-test and post-test with a control group. The statistical population included all soldiers with borderline personality traits or disorder which had been referred to Army Ground Forces Psychiatric Subspecialty Hospital of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran in 2019 and 20 of them were selected by available purposive sampling methods and randomly divided in the experimental and control groups. The results showed an improved emotional-cognitive regulation and reduced self-harm in the experimental group compared to the control group. As a result, this treatment can be used to improve emotional-cognitive regulation and reduce self-harm in soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorders.

Keywords: Borderline personality disorder, emotional-cognitive regulation, psychodrama, self-harm

Introduction

borderline personality disorder is one of the most serious psychiatric disorders (Livesley & Larstone, 2018). Violation in cognitive-emotion regulation is the most important variable in borderline personality disorder (Homaenejad, et al., 2018). Emotional-cognitive regulation strategies are processes that reduce arousal and negative emotions (Chohen, 2015). Stress can increase self-harm. Self-harm involves the conscious behavior such as cutting, burning and injuring which is done without suicidal ideation with the purpose of damaging body tissue (Zetterqvist, 2015). Among the treatments that can be effective in borderline personality disorder is psychodrama. Psychodrama is a set of role-playing techniques in which individuals play different roles in group sessions on stage. Morris (2018) stated that psychodrama helps people with a borderline personality disorder to control their emotional turmoil. Due to the high prevalence of self-harm in the military, psychodrama performance in soldiers with borderline personality disorders seems necessary. Therefore, in the present study, the hypothesis of the effect of psychodrama on emotional-cognitive regulation and self-harm in soldiers with trait or borderline personality disorder was tested.

Methodology

The present research was a semi-experimental method with a pre-test and post-test with a control group. The statistical population was all soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorder who had been referred to Army Ground Forces Psychiatric Subspecialty Hospital of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran in 2019. Among the patients, 20 were selected by available purposive sampling methods and randomly divided in the experimental and control groups. The pre-test was performed in both groups, and then the intervention was performed in the experimental group consisting of 12 sessions. The control group did not receive any training, and finally, the post-test was performed in both groups. In the present study, the following tools were used:

Author-made demographic information questionnaire: It was designed to collect information such as age, levels of education, psychiatric disorders, number of self-harm, injury areas, history of psychotherapy, counseling and psychiatric drugs.

Cognitive-emotion regulation questionnaire: it was designed by Garnefski and kraaig (2006). With obtained total reliability, by Cronbach's alpha method, equal to 0.93. In Iran, this questionnaire has been standardized by Hasani (2011), and its Cronbach's alpha has been reported between 0.76 to 0.92.

Klonsky & Glenn's Inventory of Statements About Self-Injury: It was designed by Klonsky & Glenn (2009), with obtained reliability, by Cronbach's alpha method, equal to 0.89. In Iran, Khanipour, et al., (2011) reported Cronbach's total score of 0.94.

Psychodrama: Psychodrama sessions were designed based on the Morris model (2018), Karkhaneh, et al., (2017) reported a high percentage of improvement.

Findings

The results showed that in the scores of negative strategies of emotional-cognitive regulation of soldiers, the difference both in the pre-test and in the groups was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$) and ($P < 0.01$). In other words, the soldiers in the experimental group had a decrease in negative emotional-cognitive strategies compared to the control group. Also, in the scores of positive strategies of emotional-cognitive regulation of soldiers, the difference in groups was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$) and ($P < 0.01$). In other words, the soldiers in the experimental group, compared to the control group, had an increase in positive emotional-cognitive strategies. Thus, psychodrama training has improved the emotional- cognitive regulation of soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorder. Table 1 shows the results of the effect of psychodrama on self-harm in soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorders.

Table 1: Results of pre-test and post-test means of self-harm attempt in groups

Variables	Studied groups				Levene's test	
	Experimental		Control		F-value	Significance level P
	Mean	Deviation standard	Mean	Deviation standard		
Pre-test	12.50	4.60	13.80	4.18	2.82	0.11
Post-test	1.60	2.41	13.40	4.81		

The results of the covariance analysis on comparing the mean scores of self-harm of soldiers in experimental and control groups in Table 2 show that in attempting self-harm of soldiers, the difference between the groups was statistically significant ($P < 0.1$). In other words, the soldiers in the experimental group had less self-harm compared to the control group. Therefore, it can be said that psychodrama has reduced the self-harm of soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorder.

Table 2: Results of analysis of covariance of the difference between the mean scores of soldiers' self-harm in groups

State	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F-value	Significance level	Effect rate	Statistical power
Pre-test	1	50.66	4.09	0.059	0.19	0.48
Group membership	1	623.76	50.46**	0.001	0.75	1

(**) Significance level of 0.01

Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed that psychodrama had a significant effect on emotional- cognitive regulation in soldiers with traits or borderline personality disorder. These results were consistent with (Ghodrati Mirkouhi, et al., 2019). This study also showed that the experimental group's self-harm scores were significantly different in the pre-test and post-test stages. These results were consistent with the findings of Ashouri, et al., (2018). One of the limitations of this research is the lack of long-term access to soldiers and implementing the follow-up period. On the other hand, according to the research results, it is suggested that in order to perform a follow-up stage for investigating the long-term effects of psychodrama, and this treatment be used in a larger sample size of the soldiers in other parts of the country and different groups including different ages, different education and in women with traits or borderline personality disorder.

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