

## The Effectiveness of Emotion Regulation Training on Anxiety Sensitivity and Worry of Women with Panic Disorder

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### Abstract

The present study was conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of emotion regulation training on anxiety sensitivity and worry in women with panic disorder. This semi-experimental study was carried out using pre-test and post-test with control group from all panic disorder patients visited in Ardabil Comprehensive health clinic, 30 patients were selected through the availability sampling method and randomly were placed into two equal experimental and control groups. Experimental group experienced 8 weeks of Emotion Regulation, while control group were just followed. Anxiety Sensitivity questionnaire and Pennsylvania state worry questionnaire were used as the study instrument. Data were analyzed by descriptive indexes and analysis of covariance. The result of comparing post-test of scores in two groups showed that there was a significant difference in Anxiety Sensitivity and worry scores of the intervention group and the control group, meaning that the training reduced Anxiety Sensitivity and worry in Women with Panic Disorder.

**Keywords:** Anxiety Sensitivity, emotion regulation training, panic disorder, worry

### Introduction

Panic Disorder is unique among the anxiety disorders. Attacks are discrete periods of intense uncontrollable fear, whose symptoms can be roughly divided as originating from one of three systems: the autonomic nervous system, the respiratory system and a cognitive system. PD is a common psychiatric. PD associated with high levels of social, occupational, physical disability, and considerable economic costs (Muret and et al, 2018).

Patients with PD experience high Anxiety Sensitivity and worry. Despite the success of cognitive behavioral therapies for anxiety disorder, a sizable subgroup of patients with complex clinical presentations such as patients with PD, fails to evidence adequate treatment response. Emotion Regulation Training (ERT) integrates facets of traditional and contemporary CBT, mindfulness, and emotion-focused interventions within a framework that reflects basic and translational findings in affect science. Specifically, ERT is mechanism-targeted intervention focusing on patterns of motivational dysfunction while cultivating emotion regulation skills. Open and randomized

controlled Psychotherapy trials have demonstrated considerable preliminary evidence for the utility of this approach as well as for the underlying proposed mechanisms (Gross, 2015). Recent research suggests that a panic attack, which is the core, defining feature of PD, is associated with difficulties in emotion regulation. The experience of a panic attack is associated with decreased emotional clarity, and patients with panic disorder are reported to have greater difficulty labeling emotion. Patients with PD exhibit emotion regulation difficulties in the of emotional non-acceptance, experiential avoidance, and decreased emotional clarity, which are associated with the fear of bodily sensations culminating in un-cued panic attacks. In this respect, research demonstrates that ERT can suppress the fear of fear and help improve the symptoms of PD (Wang and et al, 2016). The aim present study was Examine hypothesis that Emotion Regulation Training effective on Anxiety Sensitivity and worry in women with Panic Disorder.

## **Method**

Patients aged 20-60 years (15 Patients in control Group and 15 patients in examine Group) and diagnosed with Panic Disorder based on the Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Text revision (DSM-5) criteria were recruited in The Seyed Hatami Ardabil City Comprehensive Health clinic in summer and fall 2018. A comprehensive psychiatric interview was conducted by Psychology using the structured clinical interview for DSM-V in order to confirm the diagnosis of panic disorder to exclude patients with bipolar disorder, psychotic symptoms, Anxiety Generalization Disorders, psychotic symptoms, cognitive deficits, and neurological conditions. Patients were randomly divided into two group: Those receiving emotion acceptance strategy training (Emotion Regulation Training group) and those not receiving emotion acceptance strategies (no Regulation Emotion Training group). All subjects provided Written, informed consent. This study was approved by Ardabil University of Medical Sciences.

This semi-experimental study was conducted using pre-test and post-test with control group from all panic disorder patients visited in The Seyed Hatami Ardabil City Comprehensive Health clinic in summer and fall 2018 in spring 2018, 30 patients were selected through the availability sampling method and randomly were placed into two equal experimental and control groups. Experimental group experienced 8 weeks of Regulation Emotion Training, while control group were just followed. Anxiety Sensitivity questionnaire (ASI) the validity and reliability of this questionnaire was reported

by internal consistency method and using Cronbach alpha method of 0.71 (Reiss, and et al., 1986), and Penn State Worry Questionnaires (PSWQ) the validity and reliability of this questionnaire was reported by internal consistency method and using Cronbach alpha method of 0.92 (Meyer, et al., 1990) were used in pre-test, post-test and up as the study instrument. Data were analyzed by descriptive indices and analysis of covariance.

## Results

**Table 1** shows The average and standard deviation results of performing pre-test and post-test of the dependent variable (Anxiety Sensitivity and Worry) in group examine and group control woman with Panic Disorder.

**Table 1:** average and standard deviation pre-test and post-test Anxiety Sensitivity and Worry in both groups

Variable		Emotion Regulation Training		Control	
		M	SD	M	SD
Anxiety Sensitivity	Pretest	47.08	5.91	45.13	5.31
	posttest	33.61	4.52	46.46	4.05
Worry	Pretest	60.03	7.09	58.46	7.25
	posttest	53.13	7.06	58.93	6.63

Before using analysis of Covariance analysis, first pre-assumption of analysis of covariance were examine. The results of Levenes test showed that the variable of Anxiety Sensitivity in pretest ( $F=1.69$ ,  $Sig=0.20$ ), Worry in pretest ( $F=0.35$ ,  $Sig=0.55$ ) and Anxiety Sensitivity in posttest ( $F=1.44$ ,  $Sig=0.29$ ), Worry in posttest ( $F=0.05$ ,  $Sig=0.81$ ) were not significant, therefore for assumption of homogeneity of variances is supported. in addition, the results of Kolmogorove-Smirnov test showed that the variable of Anxiety Sensitivity in pretest ( $Sig=0.92$ ), Worry in pretest ( $Sig=0.95$ ) and Anxiety Sensitivity in posttest ( $Sig=0.92$ ), Worry in posttest ( $0.23$ ) were not significant, Therefore, for assumption of normal scores is supported. Accordingly, the pre-assumption of ANCOVA was confirmed in both experimental and control group. The result of comparing post-test of scores in two

group showed that there was a significant difference in Anxiety Sensitivity and worry scores of the intervention group and the control (Table 2).

**Table 2:** The results of single-variable covariance analysis on mean scores of Anxiety Sensitivity and worry in both groups

Dependent variables	Sum of squares	Sum of squares	Df	Mean sum of squares	F	P	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Pretest	Anxiety Sensitivity	198.71	1	198.708	51.61	0.000	0.73
	Worry	1282.49	1	1282.49	112.9	0.000	0.75
Emotion Regulation	Anxiety Sensitivity	1351.19	1	1351.19	350.91	0.000	0.86
	Worry	261.28	1	261.28	317.95	0.000	0.84

## Conclusion

The results of data analysis showed that the emotion regulation training have been effects in improving and reduce the anxiety sensitivity and worry of women with panic disorder. The Limitations of this study were the geographical limitation (in Ardabil), the statistical population limitation (women with panic disorder) and the use of sampling methods available. Regulation Emotion Training as an effective and economic way of therapy can help improve the anxiety sensitivity, worry, emotional self-awareness, and emotional regulation and quality of life women with panic disorder. It can be used at different levels of prevention and treatment of various disorders in society different group, especially patients with panic disorder, hence, therapists, especially those working in the field of panic disorder treatment, are recommended to use this therapeutic approach in treating the patients suffering panic disorder.

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