



## The Effectiveness of Compassion Focused Therapy on Anxiety and Perceived Stress in Patient with Corona Disease

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### Abstract

The present study aimed to determine the effectiveness of compassion focused therapy in reducing anxiety and perceived stress in patients with Corona disease. It was a quasi-experimental study with pretest, posttest and control group design. The statistical populations of the study included all men and women with corona disease in Tonkabon, Iran, during 2021. The samples of this study consisted of 30 men and women with corona disease who were selected through available sampling. The applied questionnaires in the study included Corona Disease Anxiety Scale (CDAS) and Perceived Stress Scale. The experimental groups received eight sessions of compassion focused therapy, once a week. Data were analyzed using multivariate covariance analysis (MANCOVA). The findings showed that compassion focused therapy could significantly reduce anxiety and perceived stress and considered as an effective intervention to reduce anxiety and perceived stress in patients with corona disease.

**Keywords:** Compassion focused therapy, corona anxiety, patients with corona disease, perceived stress

### Introduction

Covid-19, which is a virus from the Coronavirus family, is an emerging disease of this era. Symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing (Zhong, et al., 2020). Research shows; the most common psychological problem of corona is anxiety. Corona anxiety means anxiety caused by contracting the corona virus (Alipour, et al., 2019). The research conducted on anxiety in patients with severe respiratory symptoms shows that the prevalence of anxiety in corona patients is mostly due to the fact that it is unknown and creates cognitive ambiguity in people about this virus. In the case of Corona, the lack of scientific information intensifies this anxiety. At this time, people are looking for more information to relieve their anxiety. Anxiety can make people unable to distinguish between true and false information (Bajema, et al., 2020). Perceived stress refers to the degree to which people evaluate their life events as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and stressful (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Compassion- focused therapy is one of the new interventions in the field of therapy, whose clinical trial was conducted by researchers such as Tannenbaum, et al. (2017); and Neff (2016) are shown. Compassion- focused therapy can significantly improve the level of hope, self-esteem, mental health and positive emotions in people and, on the other hand, reduce their negative emotions (Neff, 2016). The research hypothesis was as follows: Compassion- focused therapy has an effect on perceived stress and anxiety in patients with Corona disease.

### Method

The method of the present study was quasi-experimental. The population included all people in Tonkabon, Iran, who were infected with Covid-19 in 2021. The final sample of the study was a total of 30 people who were selected based on the scores obtained in the Corona Disease Anxiety Scale (CDAS) and Perceived Stress Inventory. These men and women were randomly assigned to the experimental group (15 people) and the control group (15 people). The experimental groups received eight sessions of compassion focused therapy once a week, while the control group didn't receive any intervention during the study. Data were analyzed using multivariate covariance analysis (MANCOVA). In this research, the following tools have been used:

**Corona Disease Anxiety Scale (CDAS):** This 18-item scale was designed by Alipour, et al. (2019) which is scored between zero (never) to three (always). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was calculated to be 0.91. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained through Cronbach's alpha for total score scale of 0.89.

**Perceived stress Scale:** The perceived stress scale was developed by Cohen, et al. (1983). This questionnaire has 14 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5, and the range of scores is from 0 to 56. Cohen et al. (1983) calculated the test-retest reliability to be 0.85 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.85. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.79.

**Compassion Focused Therapy:** Weekly sessions were performed on the experimental group in 8 sessions of 90 minutes (Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007).

## Results

**Table 1: Descriptive indicator of research variables**

Group	The level	Experimental		Control	
		M	SD	M	SD
<b>Dependent Variables</b>	Pretest	48.20	5.92	47.93	6.19
	Posttest	42.47	3.98	47.20	7.83
<b>Anxiety</b>	Pretest	57.33	5.90	55.60	5.79
	Posttest	43.60	6.63	53.40	4.80
<b>Perceived Stress</b>	Pretest	57.33	5.90	55.60	5.79
	Posttest	43.60	6.63	53.40	4.80

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the research variables. It can be seen that in the experimental group, in the post-test compared to the pre-test, the average anxiety and perceived stress decreased. Levin's Test was conducted and covariance pre assumption and there was not a significant difference between the components. The condition for normally of distribution was confirmed ( $P>0.05$ ).

Findings indicated that Anxiety and Perceived Stress scores were significantly increased, which can be related to the effect of the compassion focused therapy.

**Table 2: Results of multivariate covariance analysis scores research variables of the two groups**

Dependent variables	SS	Df	F	P	Eta
Anxiety	131.22	1	3.46	0.046	0.11
Perceived Stress	703.83	1	22.83	0.001	0.48

As shown in table 2, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of anxiety and perceived stress; therefore, CFT intervention can significantly reduce anxiety and perceived stress in patients with Corona disease.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed that compassion focused therapy intervention had an effect on anxiety and perceived stress in patients with corona disease. In explaining these findings, we can say that compassion focused therapy is a positive ability that allows a person to improve the level of hope, self-esteem, mental health and positive emotions and to reduce their negative emotions. Also, in explaining these results, it can be said that this treatment, through increasing compassion and kindness to oneself and accepting problems, causes patients with corona disease to treat others more intimately despite the problems in their lives, to be more efficient in the face of problems. Recognizing such irrational thoughts reduces negative thoughts and stress and ultimately leads to reduce anxiety and perceived stress in patients with corona disease. Interpretation of results should be done in the context of its limitations. The study population was in patients with corona disease, so to generalize the results to other populations, it is necessary to be careful.

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### **Conflicts of interest**

Authors found no conflict of interests



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