




The Effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Group Therapy on Self-Critical and Psychological Capital of Students with Social Anxiety Syndrome

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Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of group counseling with a cognitive-behavioral approach on self-criticism and psychological capital of students with social anxiety syndrome. The research design was semi-experimental with pre-test, post-test and follow-up with a control group. The statistical population included female students who had social anxiety from the second secondary level in Qom province. With the purposeful sampling, 30 anxious students were identified and randomly placed in experimental and control groups. The tools included social anxiety test, self-criticism and psychological capital scale. Cognitive-behavioral group counseling was conducted for 12 sessions for the experimental group . To analyze the data, repeated measurement variance analysis method was used. The results showed that cognitive-behavioral group counseling was effective in improving self-criticism and psychological capital and social anxiety students.

Keywords: Social anxiety, self-criticism, psychological capital

Introduction

Social anxiety usually appears in adolescence and often, along with social anxiety, we witness a decrease in the quality of life, job success, and psychological well-being. One of the important cognitive factors in social anxiety disorder is self-criticism (Bokaeian, et al., 2022). Self-critical people have cognitive distortions in their thoughts, and these cognitive distortions are important factors in creating or intensifying ineffective behaviors (Ellis, 2004). The high prevalence, early onset, and negative impact of this disorder on a person's life process, as well as considering the inevitability of human presence in society, identifying and applying effective factors to reduce these disorders is very important. Psychological capital can help people reduce anxiety and manage it. In this case, society members experience less vulnerabilities and burnout and higher satisfaction and well-being (Ghashghae, et al., 2020). The method of cognitive behavioral therapy, with an educational approach and by modifying the cognitive process, helps people become aware of the interpretation of their thoughts. In this research, we examined the following main hypothesis: Group counseling with cognitive-behavioral approach is effective in improving self-criticism, psychological capital and social anxiety of students with social anxiety syndrome.

Method

This research method was semi-experimental type with a pre-test, post-test and follow-up with a control group. The statistical population consisted of female students in the second secondary level of Qom province who had social anxiety. Using the purposeful sampling method, 30 people were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. Cognitive-behavioral group counseling was conducted on the experimental group of 2.5 hours, for 12 sessions. After the end of the intervention, a post-test and after 45 days, a follow-up test were conducted on both groups. Repeated measurement variance analysis method were used for data.

Tools

Social Anxiety test of Connor et al. (2000): Connor, et al. reported the validity of the test as 0.78 to 0.89 and its internal consistency coefficient with Cronbach's alpha method as 0.94. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was equal to 0.82, 0.81, 0.79 and 0.78 for total score and its three subscales.

Self-Criticism Levels Scale of Thompson and Zaroff (2004): Thompson and Zaroff reported the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha method for comparative and internal self-criticism, 0.78 and 0.84. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was obtained as 0.75, 0.71 and 0.68, respectively.

Psychological Capital Scale of Luthans, et al. (2007): Luthans, et al. reported the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha and test-retest method as 0.88 and 0.80, respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for psychological capital and four subscales were 0.78, 0.70, 0.54, 0.76 and 0.73, respectively.

Results

Table 1 shows, that the average scores of self-criticism and social anxiety and their components for the experimental group in the post-test compared to the pre-test, decreased and the average scores of psychological capital increased.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of research variables in three measurement stages

Variable	Experimental group						Control group					
	Pre-test		Post-test		Follow up		Pre-test		Post-test		Follow up	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Internal self-criticism	6.13	0.26	4.96	0.24	5.30	0.31	5.71	0.27	5.62	0.12	5.72	0.26
Comparative self-criticism	4.80	0.40	3.77	0.23	3.96	0.12	4.61	0.21	4.49	0.22	4.54	0.16
Self-criticism	5.37	0.31	4.31	0.20	4.57	0.15	5.05	0.16	5.00	0.08	5.08	0.16
Self-efficacy	2.88	0.32	3.85	0.23	3.54	0.33	2.62	0.28	2.61	0.22	2.50	0.26
Hope	3.06	0.28	4.04	0.33	3.64	0.37	2.67	0.27	2.81	0.28	2.82	0.29
Résilience	2.63	0.22	3.74	0.30	3.34	0.26	2.44	0.56	2.55	0.34	2.44	0.52
Optimism	2.92	0.32	3.83	0.30	3.42	0.31	2.96	0.59	2.88	0.23	2.82	0.51
Psychological capital	2.87	0.17	3.86	0.12	3.48	0.34	2.67	0.35	2.71	0.15	2.64	0.34
Fear	3.43	0.23	1.85	0.17	1.84	0.33	3.00	0.23	2.56	0.15	2.42	0.29
Avoidance	3.18	0.36	1.84	0.17	1.95	0.19	2.77	0.36	2.39	0.23	2.56	0.40
Physiological discomfort	3.28	0.41	1.78	0.35	2.05	0.46	2.90	0.29	2.36	0.33	2.38	0.34
Social Anxiety	3.29	0.25	1.82	0.09	1.94	0.20	2.89	0.22	2.44	0.72	2.45	0.20

The use of repeated analysis of variance requires compliance with some statistical assumptions. The results of Kalmogorov Smirnoff, Levin, Mbox and Mokhli sphericity tests showed that all assumptions are valid. According to Table 2, the interaction effect of time in the group was found significant in all three variables (P<0.01). The intragroup and intergroup effects for All three variables showed that there is a significant difference in the scores of these variables between the two experimental and control groups.

Table 2: results of variance analysis with intragroup and intergroup repeated measurements

Effects	Variable	Source	Total squares	DF	Average square	F	P	Effect size
Intra group	Self-criticism	Time	4.40	1.32	3.31	47.64	0.000	0.64
		Group*time	4.19	1.32	3.16	45.47	0.000	0.63
		Error	2.40	34.53	0.04			
Inter-group	Self-criticism	group	1.84	1	1.84	70.87	0.000	0.73
		Error	0.67	26	0.02			
Intra-group	Psychological capital	Time	3.87	2	1.93	67.19	0.000	0.72
		Group*time	3.12	2	1.56	54.20	0.000	0.67
		Error	1.49	52	0.02			
Inter-group	Psychological capital	group	11.74	1	11.74	103.38	0.000	0.79
		Error	2.95	26	0.11			
Intra-group	Social Anxiety	Time	16.45	2	8.22	208.02	0.000	0.88
		Group*time	4.15	2	2.07	52.58	0.000	0.66
		Error	2.05	52	0.04			
Inter-group	Social Anxiety	group	1.29	1	1.29	43.66	0.000	0.62
		Error	0.77	26	0.03			

Discussion and Conclusion

The main goal of the cognitive-behavioral approach in students with social anxiety is to change and modify their thinking and behavior. Because with the change of cognitions, the entire emotional and behavioral systems of people have changed and with the increase of cognitive-behavioral skills, which helps the ability to effectively deal with challenges and anxiety-provoking situations, a person gets the ability to control and interpret events from different angles. In these sessions, students showed less self-criticism after identifying their cognitive distortions and replacing appropriate and positive thoughts. Also, since the cognitive-behavioral approach emphasizes the training of skills, the psychological capital was strengthened during the training sessions and helped the members to face the challenges and anxiety-provoking situations. One of the limitations of this research was that the variables of gender and educational level were controlled. Therefore, it is suggested that the next research be done by removing these limitations so that the results can be generalized with more confidence.

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Acknowledgments

The authors thank all participants in the study.

Funding

This article has not received any financial support.

Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest for the authors of the article.



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