



Research paper

## The Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on Positive Thinking Skills and Interpersonal Conflicts in Children of Divorce

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### Abstract

This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on positive thinking skills and conflicts in individual children of divorce. The research method was semi-experimental. The statistical population included the divorced children of the Qom Charity Institute. The research sample included 30 people who were purposefully selected and randomly replaced in two experimental and control groups. Positive thinking questionnaire and interpersonal conflict questionnaire were used to collect data. Then the cognitive and behavioral treatment protocol provided by Beck was presented to the experimental group during 8 sessions of 90 minutes. Then a post-test was taken from two groups. The results of multivariate covariance analysis showed that cognitive behavioral therapy is effective on positive thinking skills and interpersonal conflicts. It was also suggested to hold courses to reduce conflicts in children of divorce.

**Keywords:** Children of divorce, cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal conflicts, positive thinking skills

### Introduction

Children whose parents are divorced, often face various challenges that can affect their mental health and cause conflicts for them (Sorek, 2019). Among these challenges, we can mention disappointment, pessimism about the future, mistrust, nightmares, sleep problems and various interpersonal conflicts that children of divorce face (Augustijn, 2021). One of the reasons that can cause interpersonal conflicts in children; the way family members communicate with each other is that, even young children will notice, the loss of a warm and intimate relationship in the family, especially among their divorced parents. These children also will have a negative evaluation as a result of these conflicts. However, one may say that teaching positive thinking skills can deal with negativity, researchers have found that experiencing positive emotions motivates people to interact with their surroundings such as family environment (Fredrickson, et al., 2019). Also, considering that the concept of positive thinking is completely cognitive concept, as well as, that the nature of the concept of interpersonal conflicts is a cognitive and behavioral concept, the best way to intervene and treat these problems in children of divorce is to use cognitive behavioral therapy. Of course, it should be mentioned that various researches, including Hayes and Hoffman, 2021 and McGovern, et al., 2019, have confirmed the effectiveness of this therapeutic intervention in interpersonal conflicts and positive thinking.

As one may notice, these researches have some gaps, such as lack of empirical evidence and lack of understanding of cultural and social factors which may affect in some countries such as in Iran. Therefore, the aim of the present research was to investigate the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy on positive thinking skills and interpersonal conflicts of divorced children. The research hypotheses were:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy of positive thinking skills is effective in children of divorce.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy is effective on interpersonal conflicts of children of divorce

## **Method**

In this research, the researcher has used the semi-experimental research method using a pre-test-post-test design with two experimental and control groups. The statistical population of this research were included the children of divorce in Qom city, and 30 people were randomly selected using the purposeful sampling method. In the next step, the selected samples are placed in two groups of 15 people, i.e., the control and experimental groups were taken. Then, the experimental group was subjected to Beck's (1993) cognitive behavioral therapy training sessions, which were conducted in 8 sessions of 90-minute weekly and compared to the control group, whom did not receive any intervention. To analyze these data, inferential statistics from covariance tests and multivariate analysis were used by SPSS software. It is also noteworthy that all the people participating in the research were with informed consent and voluntarily.

## **Tools**

**Ingram and Wisnicki (1988) positivity questionnaire:** This 30-item questionnaire has 5 subscales including daily positive performance, positive self-evaluation, self-evaluation by colleagues, positive future expectations and self-confidence. The reliability of the tool was reported with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94 and its validity with a correlation coefficient of -0.33 with the Beck depression questionnaire. Also, in this research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was reported as 0.81.

**Jen's Interpersonal Conflict Questionnaire (1995):** This questionnaire contains 9 items for the subscales of relational conflict, duty conflict, and process conflict. The content validity of this questionnaire was confirmed by 6 professors of psychology at Preston University and Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated as 0.83. In the present study, the internal consistency of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.79.

**Cognitive - behavioral therapy protocol:** For the purpose of cognitive - behavioral therapy, the steps and techniques of Beck (1993) cognitive - behavioral therapy were used for this research.

## **Results**

Descriptive findings showed that the participants were 66.7% boys and 33.3% girls. Also, 66.7% of the participants were in the age group of 12-13 years. Examining the average of the variables shows that in the experimental group, the score of people in positive thinking skills increased from 91.73 in the pre-test to 104.80 in the post-test, which indicates the effectiveness

of the intervention on positive thinking skills. Also, interpersonal conflicts were 31 in the pre-test, decreased to 24.27 in the post-test. Before performing the multivariate covariance analysis test, four assumptions (homogeneity of variance error, M-box test, normality of data distribution and Lone test) were checked.

The findings of Table 1 show the effectiveness of cognitive - behavioral therapy on positive thinking skills and interpersonal conflicts of children of divorce, confirming that cognitive behavioral therapy has a significant effect on positive thinking skills with a significance of 0.001 and interpersonal conflicts with a significance of 0.004.

**Table 1. Results the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy on positive thinking skills and interpersonal conflicts**

Source	Variable	sum of squares	mean square	F	Significance level	Eta squared
	<b>Positive thinking skills</b>	1501.58	1501.85	57.66	0.001	0.58
	<b>Interpersonal conflicts</b>	51.82	51.82	10.22	0.004	0.28
<b>Error</b>	<b>Positive thinking skills</b>	677.04	26.04			
	<b>Interpersonal conflicts</b>	78.131	5.06			
<b>Total</b>	<b>Positive thinking skills</b>	270610				
	<b>Interpersonal conflicts</b>	23600				

## Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results and findings of this research, in the first hypothesis, the challenges that threaten the children of divorce, including the challenges of negativity, can be reduced by receiving cognitive and therapeutic training and through various cognitive techniques and behavioral techniques. The protocol from the same research was used and it created positive thinking skills in those children. Also, based on the results of the second hypothesis of this research, cognitive and behavioral therapy can be effective in solving interpersonal conflicts and reducing communication problems of children of divorce. Cognitive behavioral techniques in this treatment with a focus on behavioral training in order to the improvement of social relations and reduction of conflicts and anxiety in people. For this reason, it can be said that cognitive and behavioral therapy can be used as a successful treatment in the treatment of interpersonal conflicts of divorced children by some psychologists. Also, this research has various limitations, including: the design of this study was cross-sectional and focused only on three types of conflicts (relational, task, and process) and also in this research, the researchers could not determine the long-term effects of cognitive and behavioral therapy on interpersonal conflicts. and check positive thinking. Based on these limitations, the researcher's suggestion is to hold educational courses based on cognitive therapy and behavioral therapy by teachers and psychologists in schools and counseling centers for divorced children with interpersonal and negative conflicts.

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### **Conflict of Interests**

In this research, there is no conflict of interest



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