



Research paper

The Effectiveness of Treatment Based on Mentalization on Psychological Distress and Alexitimia in Adolescent Girls with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of treatment based on mentalization on psychological distress and alexitimia in adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder. The study was a semi-experimental application with a pre-test-post-test design and a two-month follow-up period. The statistical population was made up of adolescent girls suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder who referred to counseling centers in East Tehran in the summer of 2023. A sample of 36 adolescents were selected by purposeful sampling and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received the treatment based on mentalization, 8 sessions of 90-min weekly. Maudsley Obsessive Compulsive Questionnaire, Psychological Distress Questionnaire and Alexitimia Questionnaire were used. The data were analyzed through analysis of variance with repeated measures design. The results showed that treatment based on mentalization had significant effect on the psychological distress and alexitimia in the adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Keywords: Alexitimia, psychological distress, obsessive-compulsive disorder, mentalization

Introduction

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is defined by the presence of mental or practical obsessions. Obsessions are recurrent thoughts, desires, or imaginings that are experienced in an intrusive and unwanted manner, while obsessive-compulsive behaviors are repetitive mental actions that a person feels, in response to Obsessed, he is forced to do them (Hermida-Barros et al., 2024). Obsessive-compulsive disorder causes people to lose their ability to tolerate distress by creating confusion of thought-action and intolerance of ambiguity and gradually suffer distress Be psychological. Psychological distress is characterized by symptoms such as low mood, anxiety, depression and other psychiatric conditions. Research has shown that people who have less psychological distress report more optimism and mental health. An increase in the level of psychological distress is related to an increase in the severity of symptoms and the possibility of more suffering from mental illnesses (Tsegay, Ayano, 2024). As Tang, Byrne, Qin (2018)

have shown, psychological distress can increase the likelihood of suicide. Also, according to the findings psychological distress reduces the level of empathy in people and increases the level of aggression in people. Adolescents with obsessive-compulsive disorder have a major disability in the functions related to emotional management, so that they face many basic problems in understanding and controlling their emotions and feelings, and this process may prevent these people from expressing themselves. emotional, causing problems in the management and expression of emotions and putting them on the path of suffering from alexitimia. It seems that in this state, the person cannot express his feelings, because he is not aware of his mood and emotional state. As a result, tension arises in the person, which can make him vulnerable to psychological and alexitimia. According to this the present study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of treatment based on mentalization on psychological distress and alexitimia in adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder. The research hypotheses were as follows:

- Treatment based on mentalization is effective on the psychological distress of adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Treatment based on mentalization is effective on alexitimia of adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Method

The study was a semi-experimental application with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group and a two-month follow-up. The statistical population was adolescent girls suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder who referred to counseling centers in East Tehran in the summer of 2023. In this research, 36 adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder were selected by purposeful sampling and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The adolescent girls in the experimental group received the treatment based on mentalization during eight sessions of 90-min, weekly. The data were analyzed through variance with repeated measures via SPSS23 software.

Tools

Maudsley Obsessive Compulsive Questionnaire (MOCQ): The 30-item obsessive-compulsive questionnaire was developed by Hodgson, Rachman (1977). This questionnaire is scored as 0 or 1 and the range of scores is between 0 and 30. Hudgson and Rachman (1977) reported the test-retest reliability of this questionnaire as 0.80, In the present study, the internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha method for the total score was 0.86.

Psychological Distress Questionnaire (PDQ): The psychological distress questionnaire was prepared by Kessler et al. (2002) in the form of 10 items, ranging 5 points scale answering to the questions. They reported the reliability of the questionnaire 0.91, using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In the present study, the internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha method for the total score was 0.82.

Alexitimia Questionnaire (AQ): Alexitimia questionnaire was created by Bagbi et al. (1994), has 20 items with a five-point Likert scale from one to five. They reported that its reliability by

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89. In the present study, the internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha method for the total score was 0.75.

Results

The descriptive findings of the present study showed that the average scores of psychological distresses and alexitimia of the subjects in the experimental group decreased in the post-test and follow-up stages compared to the control group, the significance of which will be examined below. In order to check the assumptions, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality of the sample distribution of data in psychological distress and alexitimia is established ($P \geq 0.05$). Also, the assumption of homogeneity of variances has been observed ($P \geq 0.05$).

Table 1. Variance analysis with repeated measures to investigate intra- and inter-group effects

Variable	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power	
Psychological Distress	Factor1	249.39	2	124.69	39.78	0.54	1
	group	1233.56	1	1233.56	28.72	0.46	1
	Factor1×group	358.79	2	179.39	57.23	0.62	1
	error	213.14	68	3.13			
Alexitimia	Factor1	282.02	2	141	22.13	0.39	1
	group	1295.14	1	1295.14	20.21	0.39	1
	Factor1× group	475.46	2	237.73	37.31	0.52	1
	error	433.18	68	6.37			

The results were significant. at $P < 0.001$

The results showed that treatment based on mentalization has significant effect on the psychological distress and in the adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Thus, this intervention was able to decrease the average scores of psychological distresses and alexitimia of the adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder. The results of the paired difference indicated that the mean scores of the psychological distresses and alexitimia were differed, comparing the pre-test stage to the post-test as well as follow-up stage. This means that the mean scores of the psychological distress and alexithymia variables in the post-test and follow-up stages decreased significantly compared to the pre-test stage.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the treatment based on mentalization by applying mentalization exercises through strengthening intimacy, trust, empathy and understanding in the group and family, practicing understanding the thoughts and feelings of oneself and others, recognizing and dealing with the symptoms of anxiety and

depression. It can be used as an efficient method to reduce the psychological distress and alexitimia of adolescent girls with obsessive-compulsive disorder. In addition to this, treatment based on mentalization is able to provide the emotional and emotional closeness of family members by increasing the power of mentalization and cause the quality of their communication to increase. Such a process makes teenage girls suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder feel more emotional affinity with their family members and can share their emotional processes with them. Emergence and emotional expressiveness also naturally lead to the reduction of alexitimia in adolescent girls suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder.

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Acknowledgments

This article is an excerpt from a doctoral thesis. We thank everyone who participated in this study.

Funding

This research has not received any financial support.

Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interests for researchers.



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