

Study of Effectiveness of Group Supportive Psychotherapy using Interpersonal psychotherapy Method in Reducing Anxiety during Addiction Recovery

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To determine the effectiveness of group supportive psychotherapy by Interpersonal psychotherapy method in reducing anxiety of addicts who are quitting.

Materials and Methods: Among rehabilitation centers for drug abusers in Isfahan, a total of 30 addicted patients in the process of withdrawal were selected by convenience sampling, and randomly divided into two groups of 15 people as test and 15 people as control subjects. Beck Anxiety Inventory was set-up in order to do a pre-test. The subjects in experiment group participated in 8 sessions of Interpersonal psychotherapy.

Results: The results showed that group supportive psychotherapy by Interpersonal psychotherapy method could significantly decrease anxiety in experiment group ($P = 001$).

Conclusion: Based on the results of the present study, it can be said that group supportive psychotherapy by Interpersonal psychotherapy method can decrease anxiety in addicts quitting the addiction.

Keywords: patients; psychology; psychotherapy, group; treatment outcome; behavior therapy; methods; substance-related disorders.

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INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a physical and psychological illness that affects the individual, family and community health due to its nature of developing in all aspects of life. In fact, this is a great personal and social problem that, in addition to the physical and psychological effects on the addicted person, it endangers community health in political, social, and cultural aspects.⁽¹⁾ Addiction can be described as a persistent state in which there is reduced capacity to control compulsive drug-seeking, regardless of whether it involves risk of negative consequences.⁽²⁾ It is often a devastating and chronically relapsing disorder with social, psychological, and physical consequences. Drug addiction incurs enormous medical, economic, and social costs. The currently available treatment options

for addiction remain somewhat limited and long-term success rates are modest.⁽³⁾ Substance abuse and addiction is a complicated disorder that brings about some psychological, social and spiritual damages for individuals and communities.⁽³⁾ Numerous researches conducted in this field show that substance abuse disorder has an unpleasant prognosis and adds medical expenses to families and the community, either directly or indirectly. At least half of those treated become infected again up to six months after treatment, while after a year the rate rises to 75%.^(2,3)

Nowadays there are several millions of addicted people living all over the world who are in need of a decisive and successful treatment method, being useful both medically and mentally. Fear of physical

pain, psychological failures, insufficient knowledge of treatment methods, not having confidence in existing medical centers, having the experience of unsuccessful treatment or the experience of depression and anxiety after death all cause the addicted not to take any action to give it up or to reuse substances after quitting it.

Addiction affects a distributed set of brain regions and neurotransmitter systems. Although different drugs of abuse have different mechanisms of action, they all increase dopamine release which has traditionally been labeled as the brain's reward circuit to exert their reinforcing effects.⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾ Doping substances are a category of psychedelic substances having bad effects on the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and stimulating various systems of the body and brain.⁽⁵⁾ Doping substances influence the brain's rewarding center, causing pleasure and rejoice, hence leading to a kind of dependency on the consumer.⁽⁵⁾ Increased blood pressure and heart rate, sexual problems, sleep disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and psychotic disorder are among the known effects of these substances.⁽⁶⁾

Therefore, with respect to the costs of individual, social and economic harms of substance abuse, it seems necessary to use more affordable and preventive treatment. There are a variety of effective therapies whose the most suitable must be chosen for this group of patients. Regardless of using violent methods against the substance abuse that have been failed, such as the execution of the addicted in the mid-20th century in china, in last few decades hundreds of researches on psychotherapy has been done and the results show some successful methods of psychotherapy in the treatment of drug addiction.⁽⁷⁾ The most important interventions for substance abuse associated with psychological and social ones.⁽⁸⁾

Fuchs and colleagues, quoting from Mackey,⁽⁸⁾ showed a significant reduction in anxiety levels on substances abusers after an eight-session consultation in hospital. Some believe that group therapy is the best way to treat drug addiction in comparison with individual psychotherapy. Group therapists also use different approaches to treat the addicted and a lot of progress has been gained over the past years in the field of addiction treatment. A lot of reports confirm the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy in the treatment of psychiatric disorders of addicted people.⁽⁹⁾

Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) is aware of the effect of early development with its deep experiences on the subsequent relationship but focuses on improving their following relations. IPT instead of reconstructing and analyzing the past, tries to help improve interpersonal

relationships at present time.⁽¹⁰⁾ IPT directly teaches how we can establish relationship with others directly, hence improving the patient's interpersonal relations. It emphasizes on helping patients to assess their interactions with others and focuses on the development of social skills in current time and pay attention to the person's retreat.⁽¹¹⁾

Mufson and colleagues,⁽¹²⁾ in their research, compared the supportive IPT versus clinical overview on depressed teenagers and showed that individuals who participated in the treatment sessions of IPT than those who participated in the clinical overview improved their social problem solving skills including problem solving, positive direction, the logical problem solving, providing alternative solutions, approving and following solutions showed a significant progress. New researches suggest that a supportive psychotherapy and educational interventions improve the quality of life and increases hope in people's lives.⁽¹³⁾ Due to the prevalence of anxiety among the addictive people quitting addiction and the success of group therapy in the treatment of mental disorders, and considering the necessity of using this treatment to reduce the problem of anxiety through interpersonal supporting approach, the present study tries to investigate on the effects of this method on reducing anxiety in addicted people in the course of quitting addiction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Population

The method used in this study was experimental with pre-posttest design with a control group. The statistical population consisted of all addicted male patients quitting addiction and referred to Isfahan Addiction Centers. They were suffering from some symptoms of anxiety. This study used the available sampling procedure, so among the referents that scored one point higher than the average of standard deviation on Beck's anxiety questionnaire 100 persons were selected. Then 30 people were selected randomly and assigned into two groups of 15 members both in control and experiment groups.

After assigning the participants in two groups of control and experiment with 15 persons in each, pretest phase was performed. Then, IPT interventions were presented to the experiment group in eight 90-minute sessions. Finally, post-test phase was performed on both control and experiment groups.

Interventions

After testing the PSW of the two groups, a treatment period of 12 sessions were conducted in experiment group. Each of these therapy sessions developed with an aim including:

Session 1: getting familiar with other members of the group and the leader, the benefits of group counseling and the group rules, providing a brief description of the theory of reality therapy; describing the symptoms of an anxiety disorder, making interpersonal relationship, and summarizing health plan, carrying the pre-test out. The group counseling provided persons with a venue in which consultation among and between group members could occur collaboratively, without perceived duress.

Session 2: explaining an anxiety disorder in the context of bio-socio-psychosocial dimensions, defining symptoms of individuals as part of a recognized disorder (Sick Role).

Session 3: evaluating the interpersonal relationships in past and current time, filling out interpersonal relationships inventory, establishing a connection between social phobia and relationships of patients, helping patients to participate and interact with the members of the group.

Session 4: defining interpersonal realm and determining unsafe roles and objectives, fully individualized as a primary goal.

Session 5: analyzing communication and interaction of individuals, facilitating the expression of emotional reactions toward what exists within and outside the group experience.

Sessions 6 and 7: preparing to change interpersonal and communication patterns, preparing to transfer the roles and its processing through following steps:

- Changing the negative expectations and anxiety before an interpersonal event.
- Preparing the clients for that event by considering the options of interpersonal strategies.
- Examining the clients' experiences after the event.

Session 8: working on interpersonal issues like inaction, uncertainty, expression of anger, and fear of disapproval.

Session 9: enhancing interpersonal skills such as expressing needs and feelings, reacting to others' feedbacks and working on the awareness, acceptance and tolerance of ones emotions.

Session 10: stimulating the brevity and autonomy in case the group members avoid interpersonal issues, assessment, the results of working on unsafe roles, and highlighting the obtained changes in role functions and its consequences.

Session 11: reviewing the progress of treatment, preparing for the transition and the end of treatment sessions, explaining the social isolation and receiving social support, consolidating the resulting changes and preparing the clients to deal with the challenging experiences in future.

Session 12: an overview of issues discussed in the previous sessions and expressing feelings about the termination of the treatment sessions, and presenting indicators of alerts to refer to the therapist.

After the completion of the treatment period on the group, the post-test was performed on both control and experiment groups.

Measurement Tools

Beck's Anxiety Scale: The scale has 21 questions assessing the severity of symptoms of anxiety based on the Likert scale resulting 0 to 63. The aim of this scale is to assess anxiety symptoms reducing the overlapping of depression symptoms. Its psychometric features including reliability and validity has been conformed so that, based on the research by Kaviani and Mousavi, the reliability and validity of the scale in Iranian population is 0.83 and 0.72, respectively.⁽¹⁴⁾

RESULTS

As **Table 1** shows, the average score on pre-test of anxiety for the experiment group is 22.23 and for control group is 21.74. As **Table 2** shows, the average score on post-test of anxiety for experimental group is 14.44 and for control group is 20.33. As **Table 3** shows, the t-test with a value of 3.58 and freedom degree of 28 suggests that the difference between the two groups is significant at 99% of statistical confidence. Thus, it can be concluded that the treatment was effective to reduce the amount of

Table 1. Descriptive indicators of pre-test for the two groups.

Variables	Means	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Experimental group	22.23	5.7	1.42
Control group	21.74	5.6	1.44

Table 2. Descriptive indicators of post-test for the two groups.

Variables	Means	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Experimental group	14.44	3.73	0.96
Control group	20.33	5.25	1.35

Table 3. Results of t-test to compare post-test of the two independent and dependent groups.

Variables	Means	Standard Error	t	df	P Value
Experimental group	14.44	3.73	3.58	28	.001
Control group	20.33	5.25	—	—	—

anxiety in the addicted people.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of group supportive psychotherapy by IPT method on reducing anxiety in addicted people in the course of giving up their addiction. The results showed that the difference between the two groups of control and experiment is significant. Thus, it can be concluded that the treatment was effective to reduce the amount of anxiety in the addicted people. These finding is in consistence with the findings of Mufson and colleagues,⁽¹²⁾ Bukstein & Horner,⁽¹⁵⁾ Weissman, Verdelli,⁽¹¹⁾ Carroll and Rounsaville,⁽¹³⁾ Chung,⁽¹⁶⁾ and DiMaggio and colleagues.⁽¹⁷⁾ The basis of this therapy is on training, learning, self-efficacy, positive features of development and changing attitude. This treatment first focuses on the person's wrong beliefs and then tries to teach strategies for dealing with the problems and obstacles. In explaining the findings of this study along with the other researches to deduce the level of anxiety, according to Cotzin's self-therapy theory, it can be inferred that substance abuse is a kind of self-therapy the addicted people resort to solve problems of depression, anxiety and stress.

As mentioned, to investigate the causes of substances abuse, researchers refer to a variety of factors such as stress, fusion, having low mental health and coping problems. Other researchers suggest that fusion by itself does not lead to substance abuse but numerous psychological problems like having low self-concept and improper coping skills may cause addictive problems. In response to the demands of the environment, the individuals with various psychological problems and a wide range of interpersonal problems, who do not know the effective strategies to deal with them, take the refuge of substance abuse and addiction. Carroll and Rounsaville⁽¹³⁾ suggest that in a long run the addicts' ability to use effective coping strategies is reduced due to the fact that addicts rely on drug-based life style so that they cannot help themselves using drugs.⁽¹³⁾ Bukstein and Horner⁽¹⁵⁾ assert that 80% of the addicts are suffering from low self-esteem, high stress levels and outer controlling. Besides, different researches show that a high percentage of substance abusers, in the course of quitting, reuse substances and become addicted again due to the high level of stress.⁽¹⁵⁾

The main characteristic of the anxiety disorder is the extreme fear more than expected. The concern is so widespread that often influences the person's daily life and the reason of concerns changes over the time. It is

difficult for the stressful individual to control anxiety and this issue can reduce the person's social and occupational functions.⁽¹⁸⁾ Occupational and social performance is an important part of the activity of the addicts, while they cannot manage the pressures of life and are more vulnerable. The anxiety caused by the impact of addiction on the addicted lives and their mental health attracted many researchers in the recent years. Anxiety disorder is a disorder that usually begins in childhood and reaches to clinical levels in adolescence and adulthood.⁽¹⁹⁾ Finally, the positive effect of IPT on younger patients makes the age of the addicts as a mediating indicator for anxiety disorder. In other words, the younger patients are more willing to respond properly to IPT compared to that of older patients.⁽²⁰⁾

This is the advantageous point to help the community of the addicts. Miller and colleagues showed that the majority of the addicts will turn to consume the addicting substances again, due to the psychological problems, including depression, high anxiety, low self-esteem and poverty.⁽¹⁾ Researches show that if the preceding and concurrent disorders of addiction are reduced, the results of the treatment would be optimistic. Meanwhile, the possibility of substance consumption will decline significantly. Therefore, it is recommended that the program of supportive psychotherapy of group IPT is used for all addicts with highly qualified professionals. Using available sampling and the lack of desire to cooperate in completing the questionnaires and the absence of the addicts in treatment sessions were among the limitations of the present study. Because the study has been conducted on sample of men, the results of the study should be generalized to woman cautiously. It is suggested that in future more research studies explore the effectiveness of the group training of IPT on various types of anxiety disorders being concomitant with substance abuse and addiction. IPT researches seem essential to be conducted along with other common treatments as well as combined treatments on the addicted patients suffering from anxiety disorders.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the present study, we can say that group supportive psychotherapy by IPT method can decrease anxiety levels in addicts quitting the addiction.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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