

Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy on Cognitive Fusion and Alexithymia in Students with Signs of Psychosomatic Disorders

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Introduction

In the past decades, a group of diseases have been classified under the title of psychosomatic complaints and it has been reported that the diagnostic problems and their differentiation from other diseases have caused an increase in paraclinical and diagnostic costs in the patients of this group of patients. Psychosomatic diseases are a class of diseases in which a person suffers from physical and physical signs and symptoms that are caused by psychological factors or may be intensified under the influence of psychological characteristics and stressors. It seems that in addition to biological mechanisms, psychological and emotional factors are involved in the occurrence of these diseases. In this way, different levels of feelings of hostility, depression, and anxiety can be seen as the predominant basic factors of psychosomatic complaints. According to this, the present study was conducted to investigate the efficacy of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on cognitive fusion and alexithymia in students with psychosomatic disorders.

Method

The research method was quasi-experimental with pretest, posttest, control group, and two-month follow-up period design. The statistical population included secondary high school students with psychosomatic disorder in Khomeini Shahr in the academic year 2020-21. 37 students with signs of psychosomatic disorder were selected through the purposive sampling

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method and randomly accommodated into experimental and control groups (18 in the experimental and 19 in the control group). The experimental group received eight seventy-five-minute sessions of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy intervention during two months. The applied questionnaires in this study included a psychosomatic complaints scale (Takata & Sakara, 2004), a Cognitive fusion questionnaire (Gillanders et al., 2014), and an alexithymia (Takata & Sakara, 2004) questionnaire (Bagby et al., 1994). The data from the study were analyzed through mixed ANOVA via SPSS23 software.

Results

The results showed that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy has a significant effect on cognitive fusion and alexithymia in students with psychosomatic disorder ($p < 0.001$). Also, the results showed that this effectiveness remained stable in the two-month follow-up period. Descriptive findings also indicated that cognitive therapy based on mindfulness was able to reduce the average scores of cognitive fusion and alexithymia of students with psychosomatic complaints.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy can be used as an efficient therapy to decrease cognitive fusion and alexithymia in students with psychosomatic disorder through mindful activities and attitudes and addressing feelings and problem-making emotions. In addition, cognitive therapy based on mindfulness by applying practical mechanisms (such as body awareness and cognitive and emotional re-evaluation), can reduce the cognitive and emotional avoidance of students with psychosomatic complaints. On the other hand, by accepting signs and symptoms, students reduce overthinking about symptoms and learn that these are part of the body's defense mechanisms against stress that they have to deal with. This process improves the skill of regulating, managing, and expressing emotions and reduces alexithymia and cognitive fusion.

Keywords: alexithymia, cognitive fusion, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, psychosomatic disorders

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