Psychological Achievements
Spring & Summer, 2025, *32* (1)
Serial Number 33, 315-344
Rcceived: 02 Aug 2023
Accepted: 01 Sep 2023
DOI: 10.22055/psy.2023.44458.3088
(Psychol Achiev)
Orginal Article

# The Effectiveness of the Group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on Attributional Styles, Coping Strategies, and Alexithymia of Divorced Applicant Couples

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## Abstract

Divorce often highlights issues within various aspects of life and the dynamics of family structures. It is frequently associated with increased levels of hostility in both men and women. Additionally, divorce can indicate underlying family dysfunctions, which may manifest as unstable, rigid, or turbulent family patterns .This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of group cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) on the attributional styles, coping strategies, and alexithymia of divorced couples in Eqlid City. This was a quasi-experimental study that involved pre-test, post-test, and follow-up assessments with both experimental and control groups .A total of 40 divorced individuals seeking assistance from the Social Emergency Centers of Eqlid were selected through convenience sampling and randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. The experimental group participants underwent group cognitive-behavioral therapy for 12 sessions over three months, meeting once a week for 120 minutes each session .Data was collected using the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WoCQ), and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (FTAS-20) during the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages. The data were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance.The results indicated that individuals in the experimental group showed significantly better performance in all components of attributional styles (with the exception of the seeking social support subscale), coping strategies, and alexithymia compared to those in the control group. Moreover, the effects of the group cognitive-behavioral therapy remained stable until the four-month follow-up. These findings can be utilized by mental health professionals to enhance couples' mental well-being and reduce marital conflict in both clinical and non-clinical settings. Additionally, the results can inform effective treatment and prevention strategies for family and community psychologists working with dysfunctional families and divorced couples.

**Keywords:** Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy; Attributional Styles; Coping Strategies; Alexithymia.

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# Extended Abstract


## Introduction

Divorce reflects a flaw in different aspects of life and the dynamics of the family structure, and it is associated with higher levels of hostility in both women and men. Furthermore, divorce indicates the inability of the family which usually manifests itself in the form of unstable, dogmatic, or turbulent family patterns. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the group cognitive behavioral therapy on attributional styles, coping strategies, and alexithymia of divorced applicant couples in Eqlid city.

## Method

This is a quasi-experimental study with three pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages with two experimental and control groups. From all divorced applicant couples referring to the Social Emergency Centers of Eqlid, 40 individuals were selected by the available sampling method and they were assigned to two experimental and control groups by completely random allocation. The participants of the experimental group underwent the group cognitive-behavioral therapy for 12 sessions over three months (one day a week and each session for 120 minutes). The Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WoCQ), and Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (FTAS-20) were used to collect data during pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages. Then, data were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance.

## Results

To assess the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy on dependent variables, we first evaluated the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices for repeated measures analysis of variance using Box's M and Levene's tests. The findings indicate that across all research variables, the results of Box's M and Levene's tests were not significant at the 0.05 error level. Therefore, the observed covariance matrices among the different groups are equal, confirming the assumption of homogeneity of variances. Additionally, Mauchly's sphericity test results demonstrated that the sphericity of the variance-covariance error matrix related to the dependent variables was accepted at the 0.05 error level. Multivariate analysis of variance, utilizing the Pillai effect test and Wilks' lambda, reveals significant differences between groups across various variables. The results indicate notable distinctions in the following areas: positive attributional styles ($F = 23.03$, $P < 0.0001$); negative attributional styles ($F = 66.84$, $P < 0.0001$);

direct confrontation ($F = 108.57$, $P < 0.0001$); avoidance ($F = 2.86$, $P < 0.0001$); self-control ($F = 57.72$, $P < 0.0001$); social support seeking ($F = 4.55$, $P < 0.01$); acceptance of responsibility ($F = 11.48$, $P < 0.0001$); escape/avoidance ($F = 24.35$, $P < 0.0001$); planned problem solving ($F = 28.37$, $P < 0.0001$); positive reappraisal ($F = 15.30$, $P < 0.0001$); difficulty describing emotions ($F = 34.64$, $P < 0.0001$); difficulty identifying emotions ($F = 139.45$, $P < 0.0001$); and objective thinking ($F = 52.88$, $P < 0.0001$). So, the results showed that individuals in the experimental group in comparison to persons in the control group had significantly higher performance in all components of attributional styles (except seeking social support subscale), coping strategies, and alexithymia. Also, the effects of the group cognitive-behavioral therapy were stable until the four-month follow-up.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that mental health professionals such as clinical psychologists, family counselors, and couple therapists can utilize these insights to mitigate marital conflict and address divorce issues in both clinical and nonclinical environments. Furthermore, these results are valuable for developing effective treatment and prevention strategies within mental health programs, particularly for family and community psychologists working with dysfunctional families and couples considering divorce at both clinical and community levels. Additionally, the study recommends that couple therapists focus on reducing marital conflict by retraining clients in attributional styles, coping strategies, and emotion regulation through cognitive-behavioral therapies.

**Author Contributions:** Mojtaba Sourian Reihanpour designed and implemented the intervention framework, quantitative and qualitative evaluation of data, and data analysis; Mahsa Kashefizadeh also supervised the submission and correction of the article and the responsible author. The structuring and writing of this article were done by the authors.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors thank all the participants who have contributed to this research.

**Conflicts of interest:** The author declares there is no conflict of interest in this article.

**Funding:** This article is the result of the Master's thesis which is supported by the Adiban Institute of Higher Education