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Orginal Article

# Comparison of the Effectiveness of Community-Based Treatment (TC) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in the Defense Mechanisms of People Addicted to Methamphetamine

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to compare the effectiveness of the therapeutic community (TC) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) on the defense mechanisms of methamphetamine addicts. The present study was applied in terms of purpose and was a quasi-experimental study with a pre-test-post-test design with two experimental groups and a control group with a follow-up period. The study population included all methamphetamine addicts who used methamphetamine at least twice a month and at most three times a week for 2 years, who were receiving treatment in two treatment centers: Raz Aramesh Community Therapy Center and NA sessions at Shahid Ostadian Welfare Center in Shiraz during the first 6 months of 2021. To examine and compare three groups, 15 people in each group, for a total of 45 people, were considered. The instrument used in this study was the Andrews et al. Defense Mechanisms Questionnaire, and the TC treatment protocol and the NA treatment protocol were administered in two 90-minute sessions. In all three groups, these questionnaires were first distributed, and then educational interventions were conducted for the test groups. Finally, a post-test was administered to all three groups after two months. Data analysis was performed using SPSS-22, and covariance statistical tests were used for final analysis. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the meaning of only the subscales of inhibitory control and selective attention, somatization, isolation, sublimation and suppression, and neuroticism in the experimental (under NA) and control groups. The results of the Bonferroni test show that there is a significant difference in the mean of the subscales of memory, planning, and social cognition, autistic fantasy omnipotence mechanisms and suppression, neuroticism, extraversion, and openness between TC and NA, and

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TC had a higher effectiveness. Therefore, according to the results, TC and NA treatment can be used to reduce maladaptive defense mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Therapeutic community (TC), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), defense mechanisms, methamphetamine addicts.

## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

The present study was conducted to compare the effectiveness of the therapeutic community (TC) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in the defense mechanisms of people addicted to methamphetamine. Addiction is a disease that has many biological, psychological, and social consequences, and its treatment programs also have various consequences. Most treatment programs aim to reduce or stop taking medication. However, drug-dependent patients are also dealing with many other problems, many of which may date back to before they started using drugs. These problems may even be one of the important reasons for starting to use drugs. In this way, treatment programs should not only aim to reduce and stop drug use but should also consider relevant and important psychological variables related to the initiation and continuation of drug use. Despite the efforts that have been made regarding the etiology of drug use, it should be noted that people who abuse drugs do not fall into a specific psychological and social pattern, but this phenomenon is the result of the interaction of various and numerous factors; In fact, each of the theories that have been proposed in this regard have examined only a part of this phenomenon. Among the factors that determine the tendency to use drugs, psychological variables are more important because psychologists believe that the influence of biological and social factors must be seen through the lens of a person's psychological tendencies to use drugs.

### Method

The current study was applied in terms of purpose and in a semi-experimental manner with a pre-test-post-test design with two experimental groups and one control group, along with a follow-up period. The statistical population studied included all people addicted to methamphetamine with consumption at least twice a month and at most three times a week for 2 years in 2 maintenance centers of the community center for the treatment of the secret of peace and NA sessions of Shahid Ostadian welfare in the city

of Shiraz in 6 months. They were first treated in 2021. According to Cohen's table, 15 people were considered for each group and 45 people in total. The sampling method was purposeful based on the entry and exit criteria, and the assignment in the groups was done randomly in three groups of 15 people: experiment 1 (TC treatment), experiment 2 (NA treatment), and the control group. The tool used in this research is the defense mechanism questionnaire of Andrews et al. (1993), and the TC treatment protocol and the NA treatment protocol were conducted in two 90-minute sessions in the morning and evening shifts during 12 sessions every 4 days for 3 months. In all three groups, these questionnaires were first distributed, and then educational interventions were held for the test groups. Finally, after two months, a post-test was administered to all three groups. The data was analyzed by spss-22, and statistical tests of covariance were the final analysis.

## Results

The results showed that there is a significant difference between the means of only the subscales of inhibitory control and selective attention, physicalizing, isolation, exaltation and suppression, irritability in the experimental (under NA) and control groups. The results of the Bonferroni test show that there is a significant difference between TC and NA in the average subscales of memory, planning, and social cognition, mechanisms of all-purpose ability, autistic fantasy and suppression, irritability, extroversion, and openness. And TC has a higher effectiveness.

## Discussion

Therefore, according to the results, TC and NA treatment can be used in the use of incompatible defense mechanisms. Being in a family with a member suffering from a mental disorder often imposes a major objective and mental pressure on other family members. The amount of this pressure depends on the relationships between the members, such as husband and wife and children or parents, age, and gender, the quality of their relationship with the patient before the illness, the nature of the patient's problems, and the coping strategies used. Since defense mechanisms change our understanding of ourselves, immature defense mechanisms become an obstacle to people's understanding of reality and deprive them of the possibility of rational and effective defense. They reduce a person's capacity for insight and self-discovery. In addition, people with underdeveloped defensive styles are more willing to use ineffective solutions to solve their conflicts, which causes them to remain in difficult relationships and can even intensify the severity of the damage. Perhaps one of the reasons for the

excessive use of defense mechanisms by the families of people suffering from addiction is the failure to face the same problems in the family.

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