The Effect of Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy on Reduction of Automatic Thoughts of Women

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Abstract: The goal of the present research is to investigate the effect of rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) on reduction of automatic thoughts and general symptoms of psychological and behavioral disorders of women living in Qom. In this interventional method, 30 individuals were first selected, randomly. They, then, were unsystematically divided into two equal experimental and control groups. The rational-emotive behavior therapy was undertaken on experimental group for eight two-hour sessions, twice per week. The automatic thoughts questionnaire (ATQ) was used to investigate the automatic thoughts. Data analysis was done by means of covariance analysis. The research findings indicated significant difference between experimental and control groups in automatic thoughts. The results showed that rational-emotive behavior therapy significantly reduced automatic thoughts.

Keywords: REBT, Automatic Thoughts, Women

INTRODUCTION

The condition of psychological disorders in different societies depends on their social development indices. In Iran, variety of different economic, cultural, and social indices caused unbalanced distribution of services, as well as problems and diseases. Continuous monitoring of the current condition can hugely contribute to more accurate planning in the field of psychological disorder and addiction whose formation and expansion are due to several factors. People with emotive disorders make rational mistakes, which orient reality towards self-humiliation. Cognitive therapy attributes psychological disorder to mundane processes such as faulty thought, misconceptions based on inadequate or incorrect information, and inability to distinguish fantasy from reality. The negative automatic thoughts are a subjective quality that affects one’s ability in dealing with life experiences and distort coordination unduly. Negative thoughts have become part of the life, and so are called automatic or negative automatic thoughts. They, indeed, spontaneously come into one’s head while he does not have the slightest doubt about its legitimacy and existence. Positive thoughts are
helpful and lead to toughness. In contrast, negative thoughts make individuals pessimistic and leave them with humiliated feeling\(^4\).

Automatic thoughts are usually very short-term and the patient is typically more aware of their resulting emotion than of the thoughts per se. For example, a patient who is tired in a session may to some extent be aware of his anxiety, sadness, irritability, and nervousness, but he is not aware of his automatic thoughts until he is questioned by the therapist. The automatic thoughts may be in verbal or visual (mental imaginations) forms, or both. They may be evaluated based on their validity and usefulness. The most common types of them are those that are distorted from some aspects and occur in contrast to actual evidence. In its second type, the thought is correct per se, but its result may be distorted.

There is a significant, negative correlation between negative automatic thoughts and happiness. Babamiri et al.\(^5\) showed that negative automatic thoughts are negatively correlated with happiness in addicts. Therefore, the level of negative automatic thoughts is higher in addicts, which causes depression and anxiety. In fact, one with more negative automatic thoughts is more prone to depression or experience lower level of happiness. Ineffective attitudes of him come from his subjective assumptions and beliefs about the surrounding world and future.

Ellis's cognitive behavioral therapy is among cognitive theories, which in general term are used for a number of therapeutic methods that highlight destructive and wrong thoughts as the main reason of emotional and behavioral problems and interpersonal conflicts. They try to treat the patient by employing different techniques to change destructive and negative thoughts. In this approach, the therapeutic process is designed in a way that irrational thoughts are identified, the bonds between cognition, emotion, and behavior are determined, and irrational thoughts which are contrasting with evidence are examined so as to substitute a realistic change for irrational beliefs, solve conflicts, and achieve adaptability\(^6\).

Cognitive therapy teaches people a method that helps them to evaluate their thoughts wisely and in organized way, especially when they are upset. However it seems that automatic thoughts are spontaneously formed in the mind, they are relatively predictable by recognizing the fundamental beliefs of the patient. Cognitive therapist is involved with recognizing inefficient thoughts, which distort reality, produce emotional distress, and conflict with the patient's ability in accomplishing his objective. Apart from maniacs or semi-maniacs, narcissists, and drug abusers, the inefficient automatic thoughts are most often negative\(^7\).

Different techniques are available for dealing with automatic thoughts and symptoms of behavioral disorders. Cognitive emotive behavior therapy by Ellis is one of them. According to him\(^8\), cognitive emotive behavior therapy aims to encourage people to change some of their very fundamental values. Although, behavioral cognitive therapy emphasizes more on cognition and behavior, emotion is not neglected in the therapy, and taken as byproduct of cognition and behavior, and treated differently\(^9\).
The underlying assumption of rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) maintains that cognition, emotions, and behaviors are hugely affecting each other through causal relationship. Rational-emotive behavior therapy always emphasizes on these three aspects and balances between them, so it can be taken as an interactive approach \(^{10,11}\). Based on the available theoretical principles and previous studies, the main question of the present research explores whether rational emotive behavior therapy is effective in reduction of automatic thoughts in the women living in Qom.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In this experimental research, pre-test and post-test plans with a control group were employed. The study population included all the women living in Qom from which 30 females aged 18-45 were voluntarily selected through SMS system of Kimiyay-e-Mehr Psychological Institute. They then were randomly put into experimental and control groups. To investigate the effect of cognitive emotive behavior therapy on reduction of automatic thoughts, it was undertaken on the experimental group for 8 weeks. After data collection, covariance analysis was used for hypothesis testing. The statistical analyses were done using SPSS19.

Automatic thoughts questionnaire (ATQ) was employed to measure automatic thoughts. The automatic thoughts questionnaire was designed by Hollon and Kendall. It is comprised of thirty 5-point (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Usually, Always) Likert-scale based questions. It is created for evaluating the frequency of negative automatic remarks about self and for cognitive assessment of self-disclosure in depression stage. In Iran, the convergence validity coefficient of this test was reported as 67% and 74%, and the reliability coefficient of the test-retest was 76% and 88% for having belief in automatic thoughts and its frequency, respectively. The ATQ questionnaire measures four aspects of automatic thoughts, namely personal conflict and tendency to change, negative self-concept and expectations, low self-esteem, and disappointment \(^{12}\).

**RESULTS**

The mean and standard deviation of automatic thoughts in pre-test and post-test of rational-emotive therapy are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean  SD</td>
<td>Mean  SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic thoughts</td>
<td>64.33 23.5433</td>
<td>48.53 14.85581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pre-test on experimental group shows that the mean and standard deviation of automatic thoughts are, in turn, 64.3333 and 23.54833. With respect
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to the post-test, these values are 466.57 and 0.385630. In addition, the mean and standard deviation of control group in pre-test and post-test were reported as 48.5333 and 14.85581, and 48.5333 and 14.85581, respectively.

For hypothesis testing, the covariance analysis was used. The result of covariance analysis is presented in Table 2.

### Table 2. the summary of covariance analysis of automatic thoughts scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The modified model</td>
<td>3082.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3082.25</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>833.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>833.62</td>
<td>949.190</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>3082.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3082.25</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>923650.804</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32987.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding that p-value (0.762) is larger than test level (0.05) there are not adequate reasons for rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, it can be concluded that rational-emotive behavior therapy has no impact on automatic [thoughts].

**DISCUSSION**

The efficiency of rational-emotive behavior therapy in solving psychological and behavioral disorders is confirmed in many studies \(^{13,14}\). In general, it can be said that relationship training and different skills significantly affect abnormal mind and behaviors, and can correct those irrational beliefs that cause several problems for the patient. The results from this research confirm the efficiency of REBT and recommend the implementation of such programs for healthy people and patients. In the present study, the research hypothesis was not confirmed. One of the probable explanations for this finding is that the members of experimental group are selected from general population and so the frequency of automatic thoughts was not high among them. Therefore, the employed therapy could not reduce it significantly. In general, based on the previous studies as well as the resulting reduction in the level of automatic thoughts in patients, this therapeutic method can be used.

**REFERENCES**


