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## Investigating the Effect of Group Cognitive - Behavioral Therapy on Relapse Prevention in Drug-dependent Women

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### ABSTRACT

The present study is meant to investigate the effect of the cognitive - behavioral therapy group on the prevention of relapse in drug-dependent women using quasi-experimental research. In a quasi-experimental research project, 14 participants of drug-dependent women who had finished successfully their detoxification period in Dana Abuse Therapy Center in Bam City, were selected as the experiment group based on some criteria and a number of 15 participants were selected as control group among these drug abusers based on some criteria had been matched with this group. The experiment group were treated during eight 1.5 hour sessions by the cognitive - behavioral therapy group. For control group, the same sessions were considered, but in these sessions, no particular therapy was conducted on the participants. In the present research, to evaluate the possibility of relapses in drug-dependent individuals, the morphine test was administered. To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistical methods (Chi-square) were used. The results of the Chi-square test of independence indicate the significant difference of the number of relapsed women regarding their groups (experiment and control). Therefore, it can be claimed that the cognitive - behavioral therapy group has been effective on the prevention of relapse in drug-dependent women.

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## INTRODUCTION

Addiction to drug as a social crisis, is a phenomenon which is called the "Ruinous Disaster" because its ruins cause the collapse of many cultural and moral values and norms and threaten the health of a society; in fact, every year, this disastrous crisis kills a lot of its victims [20]. Regarding the fact that drug addiction is considered as a chronic and relapsing disease and biological, psychological and social factors and conditions result in reconversion to abusing drugs after completing the detoxification period, it is necessary that addiction therapy centers, after the completion of detoxification period, during the time when the probability of relapse is high, keep the visitors' relationship with the therapy centers. Different studies indicate that the degree of relapse among the alcohol addicts and drug addicts is very high.

Hant *et al* indicated that about 67 to 70 percent of alcohol addicts, drug addicts or smokers have relapse for a year after the start of their therapy; according to them, the most degree of relapse had occurred during three months after finishing therapy period. The results of these studies indicate the necessity of pursuing the treated addicts and since in three months after the therapy the probability of relapse is high, the visitors should have more relationship with therapy centers (Marlat, 1992 as cited in Islamdoust, 2007). Therefore, for helping drug addicts, the detoxification period and after that, using therapy skills doubly necessitate [17]. Nowadays, one of the most applicable approaches used by therapy the therapist group in the therapy of addiction is the cognitive-behavioral approach. The fundamental assumption of cognitive-behavioral therapy is that the processes of learning play significant roles in creating and surviving addiction and drug dependency. Therefore, these principles can be used for helping individuals in reducing drug abusing (Bakhshipour and Mohammadkhani, 2002: 17). In addition, cognitive behavioral therapy changes thoughts, expectations and behaviors related to

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taking therapy drugs and this therapy can cover coping strategies as well. According to these theory, thoughts and behaviors are teachable. Since alcohol and drug abusing is a behavior, it seems that it can be a teachable activity. Alcohol and drug abusing is the result of insufficient (illogical) stream of thought. Because thoughts and behaviors are teachable, they can be forgotten [6].

Accordingly, conducting research regarding the prevention of relapse and to help the reduction of problems due to drug abuse is significant. Although there are some studies conducted on the prevention of relapse, but regarding the fact that relapse is related to increasing tension, irritability, depression and in general, less satisfaction with life and little research has been conducted regarding the prevention of relapse; therefore, conducting research on this field is significant.

#### *Theoretical framework:*

Addiction is one of the most harmful social damages in the world of today including Iran and it has direct and indirect connections with social crimes. The existence of addicts in the society results in increasing the number of addicts [4]. The issue of addiction causes general effects on individuals in such a way that it eliminates some of the beliefs and engenders different physical and psychological diseases and causes dismantling societies and family canons [3].

In the psychology of addiction, drug addiction requires the abuse of a substance which in case of not taking it, some states are engendered which sometimes are intolerable for addicts. Increasing drug abuse for creating the same state and quality which in the first time was possible for drug abuse causes physical and psychological dependence to drugs and results in attempts to prepare it. In medicine, instead of the term addiction, usually the word drug dependency is used and the addict is the person who is dependent to drug both psychologically and physically. Dependency is a psychological state that the individual enjoys and feels calmness and satisfaction. The mentioned dependency is the most important factor of regular consumption of addictive substances. Physical dependency refers to the compatibility state in the individuals' body and appears after regular abuse of substance in the body; in fact, the individual's body will be accustomed to it and in case of not abusing, some reactions such as physical pain occur."

Addicts are not only non-productive and non-constructive but also consumers who are harmful to social life. An addict feels no responsibility towards the members of his family; his social status is weak and does not trust anybody while consider fulfilling his needs as prior to those of others. Addicts' social relationships is superficial and artificial; he rarely can have strong emotional bonds as well as loyalty and commitment. Such an individual respects only those who prepare drugs for him. Addicts' crime committal is getting more and more due to weakness of human relations and their social importance and public trust will be threatened. Since most of addicts have to supply their drugs, they tend to wrong ways such as theft, rapes and killings [20].

As stated, different studies indicate that the degree of relapse is very high among alcohol and drug addicts. Relapse is defined as a clear and long-term process which is a deficit in compatibility and coping with internal and external stimuli and stresses [5].

Return to addictive behaviors after passing a relatively successful therapy period is as complicated as the period of tendency toward drug abuse in the first stage and is dependent to different factors. Identifying these factors and paying attention to them in designing therapy plans are important for both the success of therapy measures and the prevention of relapse.

Addicts should be helped to use therapy skills beside detoxification. Nowadays one of the most applicable approaches used by the therapists group in treating addiction is the cognitive-behavioral approach. The basic assumption of cognitive behavioral therapy is that the processes of learning have great roles in creating and surviving addiction and drug dependency. Therefore, the same principles can be used for helping individuals in reducing drug abuse [8].

Applying cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in groups based on particular needs of therapists in each particular group is different. the CBT group is homogeneous, its time is limited and relatively short and it is usually is composed of eight to twelve sessions each of which take two to three hours. The CBT group emphasizes construction, concentration and achievement of cognitive and behavioral skills. Therapists clarify this point that the members of the group each are responsible in advancing therapy and determine some tasks between sessions. The type of tasks is made compatible with each individual therapist's problems. Each can take notes of his spontaneous thoughts and see how these thoughts are related to moods or cover a behavioral task which fights with avoidance [22].

Investigating tasks is a key part of each group session and indicates a key difference between group CBT and the group exchange therapy in this regard that "cold process" of the client's function in home is replaced by the "hot process" which is the main characteristics of the groupexchange therapy. In other words, the group gets concentrated on the client's descriptions of home actions instead of concentration on actions and exchanges here and now. Measuring the client's discomfort and advancement viaself-report questionnaire provide constant feedback or support therapy or indicate that Reality therapy is required (ibid).

CBT group therapists use a set of strategies and techniques which are along with diverse combinations. Therapists apply these techniques and speak with the group about them. These activities divide therapists' problems into different parts and it is in this line that it prevents them from tending towards generalization, exaggeration and deviation (*ibid*).

#### *Review of literature:*

Raeisian, Golzar and Borjali [18], in their research titled as "investigating the efficacy of hope therapy on the reduction of depression and prevention of relapse in drug-dependent women" concluded that training hope therapy can create considerable reduction in the degree of signs of depression and prevention of relapse in addicted women.

Jafari *et al.* [12], in a research investigated the efficacy of training coping strategies based on Marlatt's model in preventing relapse and increasing endurance in drug-dependent individuals and their results indicated that training coping strategies in prevention of relapse and increase in endurance in drug-independent individuals is effective.

Mollazadeh and Ashouri [15] conducted a research titled as "the efficacy of group cognitive-behavioral group in prevention of relapse and improvement of mental health of addicted individuals in Shiraz. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between two experiment and control groups in the pre-test, post-test and the follow-up stage of mental health status; in fact, cognitive-behavioral therapy was effective in preventing relapse in addicted individuals.

Kiluk *et al* [14], in a research with the objective of investigating the comprehensive effect of the plan of the cognitive-behavioral treatment based on computer in the improvement of individuals' coping skills and the prevention of drug abuse relapse concluded that this plan is effective in the improvement of individuals' coping skills and the prevention of drug abuse relapse for three months. In addition, the findings of the research indicate that group cognitive-behavioral therapy is effective in the reduction of addicts' relapse. In other words, the degree of relapse in the experiment group which participated in cognitive-behavioral sessions reduced significantly compared to that of the control group. This issue indicates the efficacy of this kind of therapy in reducing the relapse and drug abuse of addicted individuals.

Tate *et al* [21] in their research with the objective of investigating the role of life stresses and self-efficacy in maintaining abstinence indicated that rehabilitation interventions which are multidimensional and psychological factors such as psychological-cognitive approach should be considered and this approach results in reducing the problems of relapse and abuse.

Butler *et al.* [7] conducted a comparative research between behavior therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy in treating drug-dependent individuals. 57 drug-dependent individuals who were selected and randomly were divided into three of behavior therapy group, cognitive-behavioral therapy group and control group. The results of the research indicated more efficacy of cognitive-behavioral therapy group in reducing relapse.

Regarding the role and importance of the approach of group CBT in improving the solution of drug-dependent women's problems and also due to the importance it has for individuals' attitudes and behaviors, the present study is meant to investigate the effect of the approach of group CBT on preventing relapse. Undoubtedly, paying attention to such an issue is the path of enriching literature of preventing relapse, addiction and the approach of group CBT and variables related to it. Therefore, based on the research conceptual framework, the present study is to answer the following hypothesis:

Group CBT is effective on preventing the relapse of drug-dependent individuals.

#### *Methodology:*

The population of the study consisted of all women visitors of Dana Methadone Maintenance Treatment Center (MMT) under the supervision of Bam University of Medical Sciences who had completed the detoxification period. Accordingly, the investigated sample included 34 drug-dependent women selected using convenience sampling. Among this sample, 17 participants, regarding the include criteria mentioned below, were put in the cognitive-behavioral group and the other 17 participants, regarding the mentioned criteria and some other criteria including marital status, the type of abused substance (drugs such as opium, heroine, and etc.) as well as the time of addiction same as that of experiment group, were put in the control group. In the present study, in the experiment group, 2 participants, due to taking hypnotic drugs and a participant due to not participating more than 3 regular sessions were excluded from the study. In addition, in the control group, 2 participants, due to unclear reasons, avoided to participate in methadone treatment; as a result, the results of the research were obtained by investigating 14 participants in the experiment group and 15 participants in the control group. In the present study, to evaluate the probability of relapse in drug-dependent individuals, the morphine test was used. To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics such as Chi square were used.

**Findings:**

In this section, based on the provided data, the research questions are investigated and analyzed. In this section, Chi Square test was used.

**Table 1:** the frequency of group participants

	F	Percentage	cumulative frequency
Experiment	14	48.3	48.3
Control	15	51.7	100.0
Total	29	100.0	

**Table 2:** the frequency of the degree of relapse in the members of control group

Relapse state	F	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
Without relapse	6	40.0	40.0
With relapse	9	60.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

**Table 3:** the frequency of the degree of relapse in the members of experimental group

Relapse state	F	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
Without relapse	12	85.7	85.7
With relapse	2	14.3	100.0
Total	14	100.0	

**Table 4:** coefficient and significance level in the Chi-square test of independence

Criteria	Value	df	Significance level
Chi square value	6.428	1	.011
Number	29		

Regarding the results of the above table obtained from the Chi Square test of independence, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the experiment and control groups in terms of the degree of relapse ( $X^2=6.428$ ,  $p=0.011$ ); therefore, group cognitive-behavioral therapy is effective on the prevention of relapse of drug-dependent woman.

**Discussion and conclusion:**

The research hypothesis was that "group cognitive-behavioral therapy is effective on the prevention of relapse of drug-dependent women". This hypothesis was evaluated using the Chi square test of independence and the results indicated a significant result. In other words, the degree of the relapse in the experiment group which was under group cognitive-behavioral therapy indicated a significant reduction compared to that of the control group and this issue indicates the efficacy of this type of therapy in preventing relapse in drug-dependent women. These findings are consistent with the researches of Ghorbani *et al* [9], Karimian [13], Mollazadeh and Ashouri [15], Aharonovich *et al.* [2], Kiluk *et al.* [14], Tate *et al.* [21], and Butler *et al.* [7].

One of the issues which should be considered in explaining this findings is that group cognitive-behavioral therapy contributes in identifying, avoiding and fighting with diseases to the patients. It means that in identifying the situations which the probability of abusing drugs is high in them and avoiding these situations in the appropriate time and fighting effectively with the problems and problematic behaviors are related to abusing drug [8].

Finally, some suggestions are presented based on the findings of the research:

- Paying more attention on holding sessions of group therapy particularly group cognitive-behavioral therapy in Substance Abuse Treatment Centers to prevent relapse in drug-dependent individuals.
- Using psychological interventions particularly group cognitive-behavioral therapy to prevent relapse in drug-dependent individuals.

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