

The Effectiveness of Psychotherapy Based on Acceptance and Commitment (ACT) on Postpartum Depression

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Postpartum depression (PPD) is a severe disorder with long term complications for women and their infants. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified major depression as the leading cause of years lived with disability and PPD is the most common psychological health issue among mothers. After giving birth, women experience a lot of changes in their body and mind, and on the other hand, with the emergence of a new role (maternal role), they are prone to the onset of mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. A mother suffering from postpartum depression experiences various emotions, including happiness and sadness, which are not stable. Suffering from this disease may not only reduce the mother's response to the infant's needs, but in severe cases, the mother is prone to psychosis, suicide and infanticide. Although most women with postpartum depression will improve their symptoms within a few months, more than a quarter of them will still be affected by the disease. Drug and non-drug methods are used to treat depression, but since most mothers stop taking drugs after giving birth due to concerns about the effects of drugs on their babies. Therefore, many of them are not only not treated, but their symptoms worsen. Today, new generation psychological treatments are used to treat mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, etc. One of these psychotherapies is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). ACT is a diagnostic psychotherapeutic intervention based on relational framework theory. This method encourages patients to change their thoughts and physical feelings through the mechanisms of acceptance, mindfulness, and value-based action. Its overall goal is to increase psychological flexibility, which is the ability to attend to experiences in the present moment, in an accepting and non-judgmental manner, while behaving in a manner consistent with one's values. ACT relies on six related and overlapping processes: acceptance, contact with the present moment, self as context, cognitive defusion, committed action and values. Since acceptance and commitment therapy is used to treat mental illnesses, we decided to conduct this study with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of ACT psychotherapy on moderate postpartum depression. Because this method has not been used to treat postpartum depression. This study was a clinical trial with a pre- and post-test in which 52 postpartum women with moderate depression scores identified by the Beck Depression Inventory were randomly assigned to one of two intervention and control groups (26 in each group) were selected and replaced. Data collection tool was demographic questionnaire and Beck depression questionnaire. Beck depression questionnaire was completed by the participants before and immediately after the intervention. For the intervention group, 8 therapy sessions were held once a week based on acceptance and commitment of 90 minutes. It should be noted that all ethical principles have been observed in this research. Research data were analyzed using SPSS24 software and Chi-square and U-Man-Whitney statistical tests. The analysis of the results showed that the depression score immediately after the intervention was in the intervention group (17.3 ± 4.2) and in the control group (26.5 ± 3.1), which showed a significant difference ($0.05 > p-v$). The research results indicate that the therapy based on acceptance and commitment is useful in the treatment of postpartum depression and in cases of mild and moderate depression, depending on the patients' satisfaction, this psychotherapy can be used instead of drugs.

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