



The effectiveness of eating-based mindfulness training on emotional processing and self-differentiation of overweight women

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of eating-based mindfulness training on emotional processing and self-differentiation of overweight women. **Method:** The design of the present study was a quasi-experimental type of pre-test, post-test and follow-up with a control group. The statistical population in this study included all overweight women in Gonbad Kavous who in the first half of 2021 referred to overweight and obesity treatment clinics in this city. From the statistical population of the study, a sample group consisting of 30 overweight women who were purposefully selected and then randomly assigned to two experimental groups (eating-based mindfulness training) (n = 15) and control (n = 15). Were. The overweight women in the experimental group then underwent 8 sessions of 90 minutes per week of one MB-EAT training session, but the control group did not receive any intervention. The research instruments were emotional processing questionnaires (Baker et al., 2007) and self-differentiation questionnaire (Skowron and Friedlander, 1988). Analysis of variance with repeated measures and SPSS software were used to analyze the data. **Results:** The results showed that there was a significant difference between the subjects in the experimental group in terms of improving repression, unpleasant emotional experience, emotional symptoms of processing, avoidance, emotional control, emotional reaction, my position, emotional cutting and fusion with others. Was with the control group (P<0.01). **Conclusion:** It can be concluded that eating-based mindfulness training was effective on emotional processing and differentiation of overweight women and this effect continued until the follow-up period.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Emotional processing, Self-differentiation, Overweight.

Introduction

Overweight is one of the problems related to physical and mental health (Sobb et al., 2021), which is associated with a wide range of negative consequences (Balantkin, 2021). In addition to biological and physical risk factors, psychological factors also play a significant role in its occurrence and exacerbation (Hall et al., 2019). The World Health Organization (2015) considers obesity and overweight as excessive or abnormal accumulation of fat that may harm health.

Until recently, the causes and factors of obesity and its consequences were discussed only from the physical and medical point of view, but in the last decade, the study of obesity and overweight from a psychological perspective also expanded significantly (Yeon et al., 2021).

One of the therapeutic interventions for weight loss are cognitive approaches (Kashner & Basisen, 2014). The process of cognitive restructuring related to overweight includes identifying negative thoughts, labeling them and finally replacing them with positive thoughts. There is evidence that mindfulness may lead to healthier eating and therefore make weight management easier (Gadsi, 2013). Recently, third wave treatments have been introduced in the field of obesity and overweight, one of the pioneers of this wave is the treatment based on mindfulness. (Joins, 2013). Mindfulness in simple language means being aware of thoughts, behavior, emotions and feelings and it is considered a special form of attention and helps us to understand that negative emotions may occur. . However, they are not a fixed and permanent part of personality (Miller, 2021). Mindfulness therapy helps a person to move towards a rich and valuable life instead of fighting with his unpleasant inner experiences and to overcome the problems caused by eating disorders instead of stigmatizing himself (Torgan et al., 2019).

The aim of this research was to determine the effectiveness of eating-based mindfulness training on emotional processing and self-differentiation in overweight women. The current research sought to answer the following questions:

- 1- Was mindfulness training based on eating effective on emotional processing and self-differentiation in overweight women in the post-test phase?
- 2- Was mindfulness training based on eating on emotional processing, self-differentiation in overweight women stable in the follow-up phase?

Method

The design of the present study was a quasi-experimental type of pre-test, post-test and follow-up with a control group. The statistical population in this study included all overweight women in Gonbad Kavous who in the first half of 2021 referred to overweight and obesity treatment clinics in this city. From the statistical population of the study, a sample group consisting of 30 overweight women who were purposefully selected and then randomly assigned to two experimental groups (eating-based mindfulness training) (n = 15) and control (n = 15). Were. The overweight women in the experimental group then underwent 8 sessions of 90 minutes per week of one MB-EAT training session, but the control group did not receive any intervention. The research instruments were emotional processing questionnaires (Baker et al., 2007) and self-differentiation questionnaire (Skoron and Friedlander, 1988). Analysis of variance with repeated measures and SPSS software were used to analyze the data.

Results

The mean (standard deviation) age of the participants in the experimental group was 38.5 (8.7) and the control group was 36.9 (7.7). Also, the minimum and maximum age in the experimental group was 26 and 43 years and in the control group, 27 and 42 years.

The average dimensions of all the variables that have a negative semantic load, in the post-test and follow-up stage of the experimental group, were associated with a decrease in the average, if this change was not observed in the evidence group.

The results of the analysis of variance of the repeated measurement of several variables among the studied groups in the variables of emotional processing and self-differentiation showed that the effect between the subject (group) is significant. This effect means that at least one of the groups differs from each other in at least one of their emotional processing and differentiation variables. The within-subject effect (time) was also significant for the research variables, which means that there was a change in at least one of the average variables during the time from pre-test to follow-up.

The F ratio obtained in the groups factor is significant in the dimensions of emotional processing ($p < 0.01$) and self-differentiation ($p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that mindfulness training based on eating improved emotional processing in overweight women. In this regard, an analysis of variance with repeated measurements was done for the experimental group in three stages of therapeutic intervention, where the observed F ratio was in the improvement of emotional processing ($p < 0.01$) and self-differentiation ($p < 0.01$).

The dimensions of emotional processing in the mindfulness training group were significant in the post-test compared to the pre-test ($P < 0.001$). In the follow-up stage, a significant difference was observed compared to the pre-test ($P < 0.001$), but no significant difference was observed in the follow-up compared to the post-test ($p < 0.01$). The changes of the experimental group over time showed that the dimensions of self-differentiation in the mind-awareness training group were significant in the post-test compared to the pre-test ($P < 0.001$). In the follow-up phase, a significant difference was observed compared to the pre-test and post-test ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to determine the effectiveness of eating-based mindfulness training on emotional processing and self-differentiation in overweight women. The results of this study showed a significant difference in terms of suppression improvement, unpleasant emotional experience, emotional symptoms of emotional processing, avoidance, and emotional control between subjects in the experimental group compared to the control group. These differences show the improvement of these dimensions after the implementation of treatment sessions.

The limitations of the research include the fatigue of the subjects during the execution of the tests and the lack of a suitable place for the treatment group, which are referred to as intervening variables in the research. Considering the small number of researches in the field of emotional processing, it is suggested that this research should also be done on the social relationships of overweight people to prevent the occurrence of problems for these people.

Based on the results of the research, it is suggested that health centers pay attention to lifestyle education and healthy management of emotions for overweight people. Considering the importance and role of emotional factors in overweight women, it is suggested that future studies investigate the effectiveness of mindfulness therapy on other variables such as emotional regulation, emotional schemas, and emotional styles.

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