

The Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Psychological Flexibility and Anxiety Among Individuals Referred to Counseling Centers

Parinaz. Ebrahimi¹, Roshanak. Khodabakhsh Pirkalani^{2*}

¹ PhD Student in Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

² Professor Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology Alzahra University, Tehran Iran

* Corresponding author email address: khodabakhsh.pirkalani.roshanak@gmail.com

Editor

Sergii Boltivets^{id}
Chief Researcher of the Department of Scientific Support of Social Formation of Youth. Mykhailo Drahomanov University, Ukraine
sboltivets@ukr.net

Reviewers

Reviewer 1: Sara Nejatifar^{id}
Department of Psychology and Education of People with Special Needs, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.
Email: s.nejatifar@edu.ui.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Seyed Ali Darbani^{id}
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Counseling, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
Email: Ali.darbani@iau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction paragraph discussing “single-parent adolescents often face distinctive psychosocial challenges,” the manuscript provides a reasonable rationale but should define “single-parent adolescent” operationally. The article should clarify whether this includes adolescents living with one parent due to divorce, death, migration, separation, abandonment, or other causes, because these subgroups may differ substantially in emotional adjustment, family resources, grief, stigma, and psychological vulnerability.

In the Introduction paragraph that states “CBT is particularly appropriate for this purpose because it integrates emotional education, cognitive restructuring, behavioral practice, and skills training,” the argument is appropriate but still broad. The authors should more explicitly connect specific CBT techniques to the two dependent variables. For example, emotional monitoring and thought records should be linked to emotional self-awareness, while problem-solving, behavioral planning, and homework assignments should be linked to self-regulation strategies.

In the Data Collection Tools paragraph on the Bouffard Self-Regulation Questionnaire, the manuscript cites several previous reliability coefficients, but it does not report reliability for the present sample. The authors should calculate and report Cronbach's alpha for both questionnaires using the current data, preferably separately at pretest and posttest or at least at baseline. Prior reliability evidence is useful but cannot replace internal consistency evidence from the current sample.

In the Intervention Protocol paragraph, the sentence "The intervention consisted of cognitive-behavioral therapy delivered to the experimental group in eight 90-minute sessions" is too general for intervention reproducibility. The manuscript should describe the content of each session, including session goals, techniques, homework assignments, therapist role, adolescent activities, and progression across sessions. A brief session-by-session protocol would substantially improve scientific transparency.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the final Introduction paragraph, the sentence "the present study aimed to determine the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy on emotional self-awareness and self-regulation strategies among single-parent adolescents referred to counseling centers in Tehran" is clear, but the manuscript would benefit from adding explicit research hypotheses immediately before or after this aim. For example, the authors should state that CBT is expected to significantly increase emotional self-awareness and self-regulation strategies compared with the control group after controlling for pretest scores.

In the Methods paragraph beginning "The present study used a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest structure," the manuscript should explain why a quasi-experimental design was selected instead of a randomized controlled trial. Although participants were reportedly randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, the sampling method was purposive and non-random; therefore, the design should be described more precisely, and the limitations of non-probability recruitment should be acknowledged.

In the Study Design and Participants paragraph, the sentence "The study sample included 30 single-parent adolescents who were selected through purposive non-random sampling based on the study criteria" refers to "study criteria," but the inclusion and exclusion criteria are not reported. The manuscript should specify participants' age range, gender composition, educational level, duration of single-parent family status, willingness to participate, absence or presence of psychiatric diagnosis, medication use, concurrent psychotherapy, and criteria for withdrawal from the study.

In the same Methods paragraph, the phrase "randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group" requires more methodological detail. The authors should explain the randomization procedure, such as simple random allocation, sealed envelopes, random number table, or computer-generated sequence. Without this information, the reader cannot evaluate allocation integrity or the risk of selection bias.

In the participant description paragraph, demographic information is insufficient. The findings section only states that there were 30 single-parent adolescents, but it does not report age, gender, grade level, socioeconomic status, type of single-parent family, or duration of parental absence. These variables are highly relevant to emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, and their omission weakens the interpretability and reproducibility of the study.

In the Data Collection Tools paragraph on the Emotional Self-Awareness Questionnaire, the sentence "This standardized questionnaire consists of 33 items scored on a five-point Likert scale" should be strengthened by reporting the exact scoring range, interpretation of total scores, whether any items are reverse-scored, and whether the instrument has been validated among Iranian adolescents. The current description includes subscales but does not provide enough psychometric information for replication.

In the same tool paragraph, the subscale description appears partly unclear: "recognition, identification, transformation, emotional expression, environmental orientation, and problem-solving." The manuscript should clarify whether these are the original validated subscales of the Grant et al. instrument or adapted labels used in the present study. If translated or culturally adapted, the translation process, expert review, and reliability in the current sample should be reported.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.