



# Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Approach of Schema Therapy with Treatment Based on Acceptance and Commitment on Emotional Intelligence of Married Men and Women with Extramarital Relationship

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## Abstract

**Aim:** This research was conducted with the aim of comparing the effectiveness of the schema therapy approach with the therapy based on acceptance and commitment on the emotional intelligence of married women and men with extramarital relationships. **Methods:** The current research was an applied research and in terms of the research method, it was non-descriptive and quasi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design and follow-up with a control group. The current research population included married men and women with extramarital relationship who referred to four counseling and psychological clinics in Tehran in 12 months of 2019 and 9 months of 2014 due to marital disputes with their spouses and the disclosure of their extramarital relationship. Among the couples, 45 couples were randomly selected (23 women and 22 men who committed extramarital relations). The criteria for inclusion in the research included: being married, not pregnant, at least 25 and at most 60 years old, having minimal literacy, not having an acute psychological illness or problem, and registering written informed consent to participate in therapy sessions. In this research, the subjects were placed in three groups of Young's (2003) schema therapy test, acceptance and commitment based test, and control test, and before and after the intervention, they completed Bar-On's (2000) emotional intelligence questionnaire. Data were analyzed using repeated measure variance. **Results:** The results showed that the intervention of the experimental schema therapy group ( $F=6.66, P=0.020$ ) and the group based on acceptance and commitment ( $F=6.10, P=0.024$ ) on emotional intelligence in the post stage The test is effective and this effect was stable in the follow-up phase; Also, based on the results of Tukey's post hoc test, there is no significant difference between the two groups of schema therapy approach and acceptance and commitment on emotional intelligence in terms of effectiveness. **Conclusion:** According to the obtained results, the approach of schema therapy and therapy based on acceptance and commitment is an effective approach to increase the emotional intelligence of married women and men with extramarital relationships.

**Keywords:** *schema therapy, therapy based on acceptance and commitment, emotional intelligence, extramarital*

## Introduction

Extramarital relationships lead life to real divorce or emotional divorce and cause extensive physical-psychological damage to family members, the result of which is disappointment, dissatisfaction and finally depression. Based on this, it is necessary to find the root of this disorder, and with correct rooting, he took steps to correct and improve the conditions in it. One of the important mechanisms related to marital fidelity is the issue of emotional intelligence and its correct use. Numerous studies in different countries show that emotional intelligence gives a comprehensive picture of a person's ability to achieve success and has important effects on various human activities. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence is: The ability to perceive emotions, in order to achieve constructive emotions with the help of which one can assess one's thoughts, understand one's emotions and emotional knowledge, and use it to provide the means to cultivate one's emotions and develop one's intelligence. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is the ability to manage one's mood and mental state and control impulses. It is a factor that creates motivation and hope in a person during failure due to not reaching the goal. Low emotional intelligence in couples increases the probability of marital conflicts. It can be said that when couples cannot manage their emotions and have little self-awareness, they become vulnerable to conflict. In addition, high emotional intelligence means high mutual understanding and empathy. In this case, when one of the spouses sees the desire for marital infidelity in the other, it can prevent conflict with his understanding and empathy (Navabinejad, Rostami, and Parsakia, 2023).

In Acceptance and Commitment Training, we do not focus on reducing the frequency or changing the specific content of inner experiences, but rather on changing the individual's relationship with behavior. Research shows that education based on acceptance and commitment is effective in the psychological education of a wide range of problems, including drug addiction, chronic pain, epilepsy, depression, social anxiety disorder, and stress (Gadiano, Herbert, & Hayes, 2010). In ACT, the main goal is to create psychological flexibility; It means creating the ability to choose an action among different options that is more appropriate, rather than doing an action simply to avoid disturbing thoughts, feelings, memories, or desires, or actually imposing it on a person. Among the other roots of problems in different dimensions and couples' relationships, there are problems related to the formation of incompatible and negative schemas in people's lives, which is the basis for the formation of an ineffective and problematic relationship in this field.

One of the most effective cases in this area, as mentioned, is the issue of relationships and the need to improve them based on correcting incompatible schemas and creating a correct mutual emotional understanding based on existing indicators. This research examines it from the perspective of two approaches: schema therapy and therapy based on acceptance and commitment. In a more comprehensive explanation of the problem, extramarital relations have irreparable damages on the family center and the best treatment is to prevent and correct the conditions of the people involved by increasing the resistance power and improving the couple's relationship. This research examines it based on two basic concepts, namely schemas and emotional understanding. Conducting this research, while reducing the theoretical gap, provides an accurate comparability of the issue of the effectiveness of each approach. Based on this, it is possible to understand the dominant role of primary emotions or incompatibilities in these two approaches, and it can lead to the formulation of an

efficient intervention to improve the conditions and also cause a specific pathology in this field, therefore, this research raises its question as follows:

1. Is the intervention of schema therapy and therapy based on acceptance and commitment effective on the emotional intelligence of married men and women with extramarital relationships in the post-test stage?
2. Is the intervention of schema therapy and therapy based on acceptance and commitment on the emotional intelligence of married men and women with extramarital relationships stable in the follow-up phase?
3. Is there a difference between schema therapy intervention and therapy based on acceptance and commitment on the emotional intelligence of married men and women with extramarital relationships?

### **Method**

The current research was an applied research and in terms of the research method, it was non-descriptive and quasi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design and follow-up with a control group. The current research population included married men and women with extramarital relationship who referred to four counseling and psychological clinics in Tehran in 12 months of 2019 and 9 months of 2014 due to marital disputes with their spouses and the disclosure of their extramarital relationship. Among the couples, 45 couples were randomly selected (23 women and 22 men who committed extramarital relations). The criteria for inclusion in the research included: being married, not pregnant, at least 25 and at most 60 years old, having minimal literacy, not having an acute psychological illness or problem, and registering written informed consent to participate in therapy sessions. In this research, the subjects were placed in three groups of Young's (2003) schema therapy test, acceptance and commitment based test, and control test, and before and after the intervention, they completed Bar-On's (2000) emotional intelligence questionnaire. Data were analyzed using repeated measure variance.

### **Results**

The average scores of emotional intelligence in the experimental group of acceptance and commitment in the pre-test and post-test are 119.67 and 134.33, respectively; In the experimental group of schema therapy in the pre-test and post-test it is equal to 120.07 and 137.33 and in the control group in the pre-test and post-test it is 111.07 and 114.00 respectively. According to the findings, the emotional intelligence in the experimental group of acceptance and commitment has increased by 14.27 in the post-test; Moreover, the results showed that in the experimental group of schema therapy and the experimental group of acceptance and commitment, the follow-up stage was stable.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicates the establishment of the condition of normal distribution of scores and the result of Levin's test also indicates the establishment of the condition of homogeneity of variances in emotional intelligence. Also, Mokhli's W statistic for the research variables is not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the findings show that the variance of the differences between the levels of the dependent variable is not significant and the assumption of sphericity is maintained. Therefore, in the following, this statistic was used to interpret the results of the within-subjects effects test.

ACT ( $F = 6.66$ ,  $P = 0.020$ ) with an effect size of 0.18 and schema therapy was effective on emotional intelligence score ( $F = 6.10$ ,  $P = 0.024$ ) with an effect size of 0.16.

The comparison of three stages in the experimental groups of treatment based on acceptance and commitment and schema therapy and the control group shows that the difference in emotional intelligence ( $P=0.001$ ) in the post-test and follow-up stages is significant in comparison with the pre-test. In addition, this effect remained stable until the follow-up stage, while in the control group, these differences are not significant ( $P<0.05$ ).

Comparing the effect of two intervention approaches on dependent variables shows that the difference between the two groups of acceptance and commitment and schema therapy in

emotional intelligence is not significant ( $P=0.05$ ); Therefore, there is no difference in the effect of acceptance and commitment intervention and schema therapy in improving emotional intelligence, and both approaches are equally effective.

### **Conclusion**

This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of the schema therapy approach with treatment based on acceptance and commitment on the emotional intelligence of married women and men with extramarital relationships. Analysis of covariance was used for inferential analysis, and the findings showed that the level of emotional intelligence of the experimental group of schema therapy and treatment based on acceptance and commitment and the control are significantly different from each other after removing the effect of the pre-test. This result meant that according to the mentioned results, the intervention of schema therapy and treatment based on acceptance and commitment had a significant effect on the level of emotional intelligence.

It is suggested that a combined model of these two approaches be used by summarizing sessions and based on the problem of regulation and emotional intelligence in different patients with different approaches than specific sessions of these two approaches. In addition, considering the effectiveness of therapy based on acceptance and commitment and schema therapy on emotional intelligence, it is suggested that this educational model be taught operationally in mandatory pre-marriage classes for couples and the desired program be used.

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