

Open Trial of Group Schema Therapy for the Treatment of Eating Disorders

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Abstract : Background: Eating disorder (ED) treatment is complicated by high rates of chronicity, comorbidity, complex personality traits and client dropout. Given these complexities, Schema Therapy (ST) has been identified as a suitable treatment option. The study primarily aims to evaluate the efficacy of group ST for the treatment of EDs. The study further evaluated the effectiveness of ST in reducing schemas and improving quality of life. Method: Participant suitability was ascertained using the Eating Disorder Examination. Following this, participants attended 90-minute weekly group sessions over 25 weeks. Groups consisted of six to eight participants and were facilitated by two psychologists, at least one of who is trained in ST. Measures were completed at pre, mid and post-treatment. Measures assessed ED symptoms, cognitive schemas, schema mode presentations, quality of life, self-compassion and psychological distress. Results: As predicted, measures of ED symptoms were significantly reduced following treatment. No significant changes were observed in early maladaptive schema severity; however, reductions in schema modes were observed. Participants did not report improvements in general quality of life measures following treatment, though improvement in psychological well-being was observed. Discussion: Overall, the findings from the current study support the use of group ST for the treatment of EDs. It is expected that lengthier treatment is needed for the reduction in schema severity. Given participant dropout was considerably low, this has important treatment implications for the suitability of ST for the treatment of EDs.

Keywords : eating disorders, schema therapy, treatment, quality of life

Conference Title : ICP 2023 : International Conference on Psychology

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : June 22-23, 2023