

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMOTION-FOCUSED THERAPY AND COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY IN EDUCATION

**Humanidades
& Inovação**

UMA ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA DA TERAPIA FOCADA NA EMOÇÃO E DA TERAPIA COGNITIVO-COMPORTAMENTAL NA EDUCAÇÃO

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Abstract: Many individuals experiencing psychological problems find themselves trapped in between their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Emotions help individuals to take action in order to meet their needs. The primary goal of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) is to help clients develop skills such as recognizing, expressing, understanding, transforming, and regulating their emotions. On the other hand, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a structured therapeutic approach that emphasizes how our thoughts shape our feelings and behaviors. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis and comparison of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in education. The general comparison criteria used in the study includes: Therapeutic Approach and Core Assumptions, Therapy Process and Structure, Techniques Used, Application Areas, and Similarities and Differences. The study is qualitative, and data were obtained through a literature review. Based on the data collected, the comparison criteria for Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy were summarized in tabular form.

Keywords: Emotion-Focused Therapy. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. comparison of psychological therapy methods. psychological counseling.

Resumo: Muitas pessoas com problemas psicológicos se veem presas entre suas emoções, pensamentos e comportamentos. As emoções ajudam os indivíduos a agir para atender às suas necessidades. O objetivo principal da Terapia Focada nas Emoções (EFT) é ajudar os clientes a desenvolver habilidades como reconhecer, expressar, compreender, transformar e regular suas emoções. Por outro lado, a Terapia Cognitivo-Comportamental (TCC) é uma abordagem terapêutica estruturada que enfatiza como nossos pensamentos moldam nossos sentimentos e comportamentos. Este estudo tem como objetivo realizar uma análise aprofundada e comparar a Terapia Focada nas Emoções e a Terapia Cognitivo-Comportamental na educação. Os critérios gerais de comparação utilizados no estudo incluem: Abordagem Terapêutica e Pressupostos Centrais, Processo e Estrutura da Terapia, Técnicas Utilizadas, Áreas de Aplicação e Semelhanças e Diferenças. O estudo é qualitativo e os dados foram obtidos por meio de revisão bibliográfica. Com base nos dados coletados, os critérios de comparação para a Terapia Focada nas Emoções e a Terapia Cognitivo-Comportamental foram resumidos em forma de tabela.

Palavras-chave: Terapia Focada nas Emoções. Terapia cognitivo-comportamental. comparação de métodos de terapia psicológica. aconselhamento psicológico.

Introduction

Many individuals with psychological problems find themselves caught in between their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Traditional therapy approaches, especially behavioral, cognitive, and cognitive-behavioral schools, generally focus on clients' thought and behavior aspects. These schools suggest that the balance of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that individuals need can be achieved through these methods. However, at this point, some basic questions arise: What is the role and importance of emotions in therapy? What is the meaning of emotions such as anger, panic, anxiety, sadness, and depression? How can emotions be incorporated into the therapy process as a technical tool? The search for answers to these questions paved the way for the development of Emotion Focused Therapy (Yıldırım O., 2020, p. 254).

Emotions help individuals to take action to meet their needs. The main goal of Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT) is to enable clients to develop skills such as recognizing, explaining, making sense of, transforming, and controlling their emotions. Clients are also expected to actively apply these skills in their own lives. In DBT, not only emotions but also the needs of the individual have an important place. Understanding one's own needs is seen as a critical step for the client to regulate his/her emotions (Yıldırım O., 2020, p. 254).

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a structured therapy method that emphasizes that our thoughts shape our emotions and behaviors. Based on learning theories and the basic principles of cognitive psychology, this approach focuses on developing problem-solving skills through cognitive and behavioral techniques (Özcan & Gül Çelik, 2017, p. 115).

While emotion focused therapy (EFT) emphasizes the importance of understanding and transforming emotional experiences, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) focuses on identifying and restructuring maladaptive thoughts and behaviors. In an educational setting, both approaches offer valuable insights: EFT can help students and educators develop emotional awareness and resilience, fostering healthier interpersonal relationships, while CBT can support the development of effective problem-solving skills and adaptive thinking patterns. Integrating these therapeutic principles into educational practices can enhance emotional intelligence, reduce anxiety, and improve learning outcomes, creating a more supportive and holistic learning environment.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis and comparison of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in education.

Problem Statement

Problem statement is "What are the similarities and differences between Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in education?".

Research Questions

1. What are the therapeutic approaches and basic assumptions of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?
2. How is the therapy process and structure of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?
3. What are the techniques used in Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?
4. What are the application areas of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?
5. What are the similarities and differences between Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Methodology

This study is qualitative research comparing Emotion Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in various aspects in education. Qualitative research is a type of research conducted with data obtained through methods such as observation and document analysis and represents a holistic examination of events in a realistic environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek, Qualitative Research Methods in Social Sciences, 2011).

Research Model

This research was conducted in line with a descriptive survey. Descriptive survey is a type of research that is usually conducted on a large sample. In this method, the researcher describes existing situations, phenomena or events, collects data and tries to infer general trends, characteristics or status from these data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, Qualitative Research Methods in Social Sciences, 2016). In this direction, Emotion-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy were determined as the subjects, researched in depth, and compared in terms of their similarities and differences.

Data Collection Tools and Process

A literature review method was employed to gather and analyze relevant data. The literature review is a comprehensive, systematic process that involves the thorough examination and critical analysis of existing studies, academic articles, books, scholar reports, theses, and other credible sources that are pertinent to the research topic or area of interest. This method aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the findings of previous research to establish a foundation of knowledge, highlight key trends and debates, and identify gaps or inconsistencies in the literature. Through this approach, a deeper understanding of the subject matter is obtained, which helps to inform the current study and shape its direction (Büyüköztürk, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, & Kılıç Çakmak, 2018).

Validity and Reliability

In this study, the following measures have been taken to minimize or eliminate the factors affecting validity and reliability:

Validity:

- Internal Validity: Direct quotes have been tried to be obtained.
- External Validity: The data collection and process, data analysis process, the rationale for the choice of method, and measures for validity and reliability have been explained.
- Reliability:
- Internal Reliability: Findings have been presented without interpretation.
- External Reliability: Efforts have been made to discuss the data in the results section and check the consistency between the data.

Results

Although Emotion Therapy (FBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) are both widely used approaches in the field of psychotherapy and also in education, they have some similarities and differences in terms of their focal points, techniques used, and therapy processes. It is possible to explain these differences and similarities clearly with using tables.

Table 1. Therapeutic Approach and Basic Assumptions

Feature	Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT)	Behavioral-Cognitive Therapy (CBT)
Key Focus	Understanding, regulating, and transforming emotions.	The relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behavior.
Basic Assumption	Emotions act to satisfy people's basic needs.	Thoughts influence emotions and behaviors. If thoughts change, emotions and behaviors change.
Therapy Process	Emotional awareness, empathy and processing of emotional experiences.	Solving problems with cognitive restructuring and behavioral techniques.
Objective	Better understanding and operationalization of emotions.	Correcting negative thoughts and developing functional behaviors.

Source: Authors results

Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) adopt different therapeutic approaches. DBT emphasizes that emotions are a driving force to meet basic needs and focuses on recognizing, understanding, and regulating emotions. CBT, on the other hand, recognizes that thoughts influence emotions and behaviors and aims to transform emotional states by changing negative thoughts. Both therapies aim for emotional healing, but DOT focuses on understanding and regulating emotions, while CBT focuses on changing thoughts.

Table 2. Therapy Process and Structure

Feature	Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT)	Behavioral-Cognitive Therapy (CBT)
Duration of Therapy	Usually short-term therapy session, but in some cases longer.	Short-term therapy session, usually 10-20 sessions.
Therapy Structure	Focuses on emotional processes, establishing a deep emotional bond between therapist and client.	It is a structured approach; there is a goal-oriented collaboration between client and therapist.
Basic Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional awareness - Confronting emotions - Restructuring emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thought diary - Cognitive restructuring - Behavioral experiments
Role of Therapist	The therapist empathically helps the client to explore his/her emotional experiences.	The therapist analyzes the client's thoughts and tries to change the dysfunctional ones.

Source: Authors results

DBT and CBT use different approaches in the therapy process. DBT aims to develop emotional awareness by establishing deep emotional connections and an empathic relationship between the therapist and the client. The therapist helps the client to understand their emotional experiences. CBT is more structured and goal-oriented; the therapist analyzes the client's negative thoughts and tries to change them. While DBT focuses on emotional experiences, CBT aims to bring a change in cognitive and behavioral levels.

Table 3. Techniques Used

Feature	Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT)	Behavioral-Cognitive Therapy (CBT)
Emotional Awareness	Improves the client's ability to recognize, understand and express their emotions.	Emotions are often associated with thoughts, but emotional awareness is not at the forefront.
Cognitive Restructuring	The focus is on awareness of the emotional process, but cognitive change is also important.	Cognitive restructuring focuses on changing dysfunctional thoughts.
Behavioral Techniques	Behavioral techniques are often used to address the emotion-behavior relationship.	Techniques such as exposure and behavioral activation are used.

Source: Authors results

DBT and CBT achieve therapeutic goals with different techniques. DBT focuses on increasing emotional awareness and improves clients' ability to recognize, express and regulate, make sense of their emotions. The therapist tries to understand the client's emotional experiences in an empathetic way. CBT, on the other hand, uses cognitive restructuring and behavioral techniques, changing negative thoughts to make them more functional and correcting negative behaviors through behavioral experiments. DOT focuses on emotions, whereas CBT focuses on thoughts and behaviors.

Table 4. Application Areas

Feature	Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT)	Behavioral-Cognitive Therapy (CBT)
Anxiety Disorders	It deals with emotional conflict and repressed emotions rather than anxiety.	It is a highly effective method for anxiety disorders.
Depression	Emotional emptiness and suppression of emotions are studied.	Focuses on the cognitive distortions of depression.
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Focuses on emotional healing processes to process PTSD.	In PTSD, negative thoughts caused by the trauma are worked on.
Eating Disorders	Eating disorders are linked to a person's emotional states.	False beliefs and thoughts in eating disorders are worked on.

Source: Authors results

DBT and CBT offer effective solutions for different psychological problems. DBT is suitable for situations that require emotional regulation and understanding, focusing on emotional experiences, especially in depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders and eating disorders. CBT, on the other hand, aims to improve the relationship between thoughts and behaviors and is commonly used for conditions such as anxiety disorders, depression and PTSD. CBT aims to correct negative thoughts to give a healthier perspective. In eating disorders, false beliefs are worked on.

Table 5- Similarities and Differences

Feature	Emotion Focused Therapy (FFT)	Behavioral-Cognitive Therapy (CBT)
Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both focus on emotional healing. - Both the client and the therapist actively participate in the therapy process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both are short-term and structured therapies. - Both emotional and behavioral change are targeted.
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DBT focuses more on emotions and change is achieved through emotional awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CBT focuses more on cognitive processes and changing thoughts. - DBT is more analytical and goal-oriented, while IOT proceeds through emotional empathy and bonding.

Source: Authors results

While DBT and CBT similarly focus on solving the client's psychological problems, they use different methods. Both therapies are short-term and require active collaboration between the therapist and the client. While DBT focuses on understanding and regulating emotional experiences, CBT focuses on changing cognitive processes. DBT takes an empathic approach, while CBT is more analytical. DBT is more systematic and goal-oriented, while IOT focuses on emotion-centered and bonding. These differences make both therapies appropriate for different psychological problems.

Discussion and Conclusion

After the findings are analyzed, the following conclusions are reached;

Emotion Therapy (FBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) are two important therapeutic approaches that are effective and widely used in the field of psychotherapy and also in education. Both therapies are based on different theoretical foundations and are applied with different techniques to treat psychological disorders. However, the aim of these therapies is fundamentally similar: To improve clients' quality of life, to help them overcome psychological problems, and stimulate emotional healing (Salimi Roodsary, Ghorban Shiroudi, & Rahmani, 2024).

DOT aims to become aware of emotional experiences, to make sense of these emotions and to regulate them. The therapist approaches the client's emotional experiences in an empathic way, helping them to explore and transform these feelings. This process is particularly useful for individuals struggling with emotional conflicts and repressed emotions. In addition, DBT allows the client to recognize and meet their emotional needs (Çelik & Aydoğdu, 2018).

CBT focuses on cognitive and behavioral processes and aims to change these processes. CBT analyzes the client's negative thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors and tries to make them more functional. Focusing on the interaction between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, helps to get to the root of psychological problems. CBT's cognitive restructuring techniques and behavioral strategies enable the client to learn healthier ways of thinking and behaving (Özcan & Güç Çelik, 2017).

Both therapies are short-term therapies and take a structured approach to achieve a specific goal. However, while DBT focuses more on emotional experiences and bonding, CBT focuses on correcting cognitive distortions and behavioral change. Thus, both therapies can be effective for different psychological disorders and can often be chosen according to the client's needs and the therapist's preference (Kalafatoglu & Balci-Çelik, 2023).

The similarities and differences between DBT and CBT offer important clues on how to use both types of therapy in psychotherapy practice. While DBT focuses on increasing emotional awareness and confronting emotions, CBT focuses on correcting thoughts and behaviors. Both therapies involve an active therapeutic process that requires a strong collaboration between therapist and client. However, which therapeutic approach therapists should prefer depends on the specific needs of the client, the goals of the therapy, and the nature of the problem to be treated (Solmaz & Işık, 2024).

The similarities and differences between DBT and CBT determine how their therapeutic process will take shape and in which situations they will be more effective (Taner-Yaşar, 2024). Both therapies focus on emotional healing when trying to resolve clients' psychological problems, but DBT focuses on emotional awareness and bonding, while CBT focuses on cognitive change and changes at the behavioral level. These approaches require therapists to make choices based on the needs of the clients (Bayrı, 2023).

There are situations where both therapies can be used in an integrated way and such a holistic approach can be more effective in dealing with complex psychological problems. Moreover, both therapies have been scientifically proven to contribute to the client's recovery and resolution of psychological problems (Çanakçı & Şahin, 2025).

Recommendations

Integrated Approaches: Combining DBT and CBT can help clients heal on both emotional and cognitive levels. This combined approach can be useful for complex psychological problems.

Choosing Therapy According to Client Needs: Therapists should determine which therapeutic approach is more appropriate, taking into account the client's problems and personal needs.

Training and Continuous Development: Therapists need to gain in-depth knowledge about DBT and CBT and improve their therapy skills.

Research and Effectiveness Analysis: More research should be conducted comparing the effectiveness of DBT and CBT, and the results of combinations of these therapies should be examined.

Self-awareness and Continuity: Clients should internalize the skills gained during the therapy process in such a way that they can use them for a lifetime.

Multidisciplinary Approaches: Therapists should adopt a multidisciplinary approach by considering the client's overall well-being, focusing not only on psychological but also on physical and environmental factors.

Cultural Adaptability: Therapists should adapt DBT and CBT techniques to the client's culture, taking into account cultural differences.

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