



## The Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Resilience and Cognitive Avoidance Components of Aggressive Female Students with Emphasis on Cultural Context

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### Abstract

The aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy on resilience and cognitive avoidance components of aggressive female students with an emphasis on the cultural context. The statistical population of the study was all ninth grade female students in Ahvaz in 2024. The sample of the study was 30 individuals from the aforementioned population who were selected through purposive sampling procedure and randomly assigned to an experimental group (15 participants) and control group (15 participants). The research method was a semi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with control group and follow-up. The research instruments included Sexton and Dugas's Cognitive Avoidance Questionnaire (2008) and Connor and Davidson's Resilience Questionnaire (2003). The experimental group was exposed to 8 sessions of acceptance and commitment therapy, 90 minutes each for twice a week. After two months later the follow-up was processed. In order to analyze the data, repeated measures analysis of variance test was used. The results of the study showed that acceptance and commitment therapy significantly reduced cognitive avoidance and increased resilience in the experimental group. It should be concluded that by applying acceptance and commitment therapy and adapting it to specific cultural needs and characteristics, the psychological and social status of aggressive female students could be improved.



## Extended abstract

**Introduction:** Adolescence is a period of learning and personality formation, and relatively speaking, it should be said that this is the leading period in learning in the human development cycle, and it is during this period that the identity of the individual is formed. One of the most important concerns in the field of school psychology is understanding how students try to deal with academic and social problems. One of the most common of these externalized behavioral problems is aggression. Aggression refers to violent attacks or threats by an individual that intentionally targets other people. Aggression disorder is a pervasive disorder associated with high rates of school dropout. It is an anxiety disorder that causes significant distress and impairment in at least some areas of daily life. Physical symptoms often include excessive sweating, shaking, fever, palpitations, and nausea. Violence may accompany aggression, and panic attacks may also occur under intense fear and distress. Aggression is one of the challenging behaviors among students that can have profound effects on educational and social environments. This behavior is considered a reaction to pressures, frustrations, and emotional problems and can manifest in various forms such as physical, verbal, or social aggression. However, the cultural context in which students live plays a key role in the formation and manifestation of these behaviors. The culture of any society is a set of values, beliefs, and norms that influence individual and social behaviors. In some cultures, aggression may be viewed as an acceptable behavior in response to threats or challenges, while in others, it is distasteful and unacceptable. Also, social institutions such as family, school, and friends can play a role in shaping aggressive attitudes and behaviors. Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy on resilience and cognitive avoidance components of aggressive female students with an emphasis on the cultural context.

**Methods:** The statistical population of the study was all ninth grade female students in Ahvaz in 2024. The sample of the study was 30 individuals from the aforementioned population who were selected through purposive sampling procedure and randomly assigned to an experimental group (15 participants) and control group (15 participants). The research method was a semi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with control group and follow-up. The research instruments included Sexton and Dugas's Cognitive Avoidance Questionnaire (2008) and Connor and Davidson's Resilience Questionnaire (2003). The experimental group was exposed to 8 sessions of acceptance and commitment therapy, 90 minutes each for twice a week. After two months later the follow-up was processed. In order to analyze the data, repeated measures analysis of variance test was used.

**Results:** The results of the study showed that acceptance and commitment therapy significantly reduced cognitive avoidance and increased resilience in the experimental group.

**Conclusions:** In explaining the findings, it could be declared that acceptance and commitment therapy is a psychotherapy approach that emphasizes acceptance of internal experiences, increasing resiliency, and commitment to personal values. This therapy could help individuals achieve meaningful and adaptive lives by reducing cognitive avoidance and increasing resilience. Resilience, as a person's ability to adapt and cope



with stressful situations, plays an important role in mental health. Aggressive female students often face psychosocial and cultural challenges that could reduce their resilience. Cognitive avoidance includes strategies such as thought suppression, thought substitution, distraction, avoidance of threatening stimuli, and transforming images into thoughts that could hinder psychological growth. ACT therapy could help reduce cognitive avoidance components by emphasizing acceptance of internal experiences and reducing avoidance of unpleasant thoughts and feelings. The results of this study clearly showed that by applying acceptance and commitment therapy and adapting it to specific cultural needs and characteristics, the psychological and social status of students could be improved. This approach could not only help to reduce aggressive behaviors, but also be effective in creating a healthy and supportive atmosphere in educational environments. In addition, this research can be used as a scientific basis for the design and implementation of therapeutic and educational interventions in schools, especially in different communities that face different cultural challenges.

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