

Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy on Level of Stress and Anxiety Among Sober Alcohol Dependents Attending Self Help Groups in Selected Areas

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Stress and anxiety are common, especially in challenging situations. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) helps manage these by addressing irrational thoughts. It is also effective in reducing emotional distress linked to alcohol addiction.

Methodology: This study evaluates the levels of stress and anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self-help groups and assesses the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in reducing these levels. A quantitative, quasi-experimental non-randomized control group design was used, with 60 participants (30 in the control group and 30 in the experimental group) selected through convenience sampling. Conducted over 28 days, the research setting included selected self-help groups. Reliability scores for the stress and anxiety assessment tools were high (0.99) based on the test-retest method, ensuring the study's credibility. A pilot study confirmed feasibility for larger-scale research. The findings provide key insights into REBT's role in improving mental health among sober alcohol dependents.

Result: The study demonstrated that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is significantly effective in reducing both stress and anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self-help groups. For stress, pretest results in the experimental group showed 43.3% of participants had moderate stress and 56.7% had high stress. Posttest results revealed substantial improvement, with 33.3% reporting low stress and 66.7% reporting moderate stress. The paired t-test showed a significant reduction in stress scores, with an average decrease from 26.8 to 16.6 (p -value < 0.05). Similarly, anxiety levels improved significantly. In the experimental group, pretest anxiety results showed 56.7% with moderate anxiety, which dropped to 13.3% posttest. The paired t-test revealed a significant decrease in anxiety scores from 26 to 15.3 (p -value < 0.05). Comparison between experimental and control groups also confirmed the significant impact of REBT on reducing both stress and anxiety levels.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that REBT is a highly effective intervention for managing stress and anxiety in sober alcohol dependents.

Keywords: Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Stress, Anxiety, Sober Alcohol Dependents, Self-help Groups

INTRODUCTION

Stress and anxiety are common human experiences, often arising from challenging situations like exams, job interviews, or interpersonal conflicts. While stress can be motivating and help individuals cope with difficulties, excessive stress can lead to mental and physical health problems. Similarly, anxiety—an emotional response characterized by fear or worry about future events—can be disruptive when it leads to nervous behaviors, physical symptoms, and avoidance of feared situations. Both stress and anxiety impact overall well-being and require effective coping strategies for management.¹

One such strategy is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), a subtype of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), developed by psychologist Albert Ellis. REBT focuses on helping individuals identify and challenge irrational beliefs that contribute to emotional distress, replacing them with more rational, healthy ways of thinking. By addressing these thought patterns, individuals can better manage stress and anxiety.²

The issue of alcohol abuse provides a critical context for understanding stress and its impact on society. Alcohol misuse has been prevalent throughout history, affecting individuals, families, and communities. In India, alcohol consumption rates are alarmingly high, with the country leading globally in per capita alcohol consumption at 8.3 liters per person. The state of Maharashtra, home to over 96 million people, has the highest percentage of alcoholics, with 6.9% of the population grappling with alcohol addiction.³ The societal and economic consequences of alcohol abuse are vast, as the alcohol industry in India is valued at 7,500 crore rupees annually. As alcohol misuse continues to affect millions, strategies like REBT could be essential in addressing the psychological issues linked to alcohol addiction, ultimately promoting mental health and reducing alcohol dependence.⁴

NEED OF THE STUDY

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) was developed by American psychologist Albert Ellis in the mid-1950s as a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Inspired by the ideas of ancient philosophers such as Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Confucius, REBT focuses on the belief that individuals are not disturbed by external events themselves, but by their interpretations of these events. Ellis emphasized that irrational beliefs are the root cause of emotional distress and sought to help people replace these beliefs with more rational, healthy thinking. In his 1957 paper *Rational Psychotherapy and Individual Psychology*, Ellis laid the groundwork for REBT, originally called Rational Therapy.⁵ The approach differed from Alfred Adler's individual psychology and was influenced by the cognitive therapy introduced by psychiatrist Aaron Beck. Ellis believed that individuals could manage their emotions by challenging irrational thoughts, a concept echoed in Stoic philosophy. Psychology Today recognized Ellis as one of the most influential figures in modern psychotherapy, noting that “no individual—not even Freud himself—has had a greater impact on the field.” REBT continues to be widely used, helping individuals develop healthier emotional responses by addressing irrational beliefs and promoting rational thinking.⁶ In the study by Boschloo et al. (2012), it was found that the persistence of depressive and/or anxiety disorders over a 2-year period was significantly higher among individuals with either remitted or current alcohol dependence. Specifically, 62% of those with remitted alcohol dependence and 67% of those with current dependence continued to experience these disorders, compared to 53% of those with no lifetime alcohol use disorder. However, this increased persistence was not observed in individuals with remitted or current alcohol abuse, with rates of 51% and 46%, respectively. Severe alcohol dependence, defined as meeting six or seven diagnostic criteria, was a particularly strong predictor of continued depressive and

anxiety disorders, with 95% of individuals in this category still suffering from these conditions at follow-up. This association remained significant even after accounting for the severity of the mental health conditions, psychosocial factors, and treatment variables. Moderate dependence, involving three to five diagnostic criteria, did not show the same predictive power. This research highlights the long-term mental health risks associated with severe alcohol dependence, even after periods of remission.⁷

AIM OF THE STUDY

To assess the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of stress and anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to assess the levels of stress and anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self-help groups, as well as the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in reducing these levels. Conducted using a quantitative research approach, the quasi-experimental non-randomized control group design involved 60 participants, with 30 in the control group and 30 in the experimental group. The sampling was done using a non-probability convenience technique, and the study was carried out over 28 days in selected self-help group settings. A reliability measurement of the tools used to assess stress and anxiety showed a high reliability score of 0.99 for both, based on the test-retest method. A pilot study conducted on six samples demonstrated the feasibility of the research, supporting the potential for scaling to a larger sample size. The study also includes the evaluation of demographic variables and their association with the findings. This research provides valuable insights into the mental health of sober alcohol dependents and the role of REBT in reducing stress and anxiety in this population.

RESULT

Section I: Description of samples (sober alcohol dependents) based on their personal characteristics in terms of frequency and percentage.

In the experimental group, 26.7% of participants were aged 20-30 years, 43.3% were aged 31-40 years, and 30% were aged 41-50 years. In the control group, 23.3% were aged 20-30 years, 43.3% were aged 31-40 years, and 33.3% were aged 41-50 years.

Regarding education, 6.7% of participants in the experimental group had primary education, 43.3% had secondary education, 30% had higher secondary education, and 20% had a degree or higher. In the control group, 10% had primary education, 53.3% had secondary education, 23.3% had higher secondary education, and 13.3% had a degree or higher.

In terms of family structure, 33.3% of the experimental group lived in joint families, 46.7% in nuclear families, and 20% in extended families. For the control group, 43.3% lived in joint families, 53.3% in nuclear families, and 3.3% in single-parent families.

Occupation-wise, in the experimental group, 23.3% were private employees, 20% government employees, 36.7% ran businesses, and 20% were involved in agriculture. The control group had 20% private employees, 30% government employees, 33.3% business owners, and 16.7% working in agriculture.

In terms of family income, 3.3% of the experimental group had a monthly income between Rs. 15,000-20,000, 56.7% earned Rs. 20,001-25,000, 26.7% earned Rs. 25,001-30,000, and 13.3% had income above Rs. 30,000. In the control group, 13.3% earned Rs. 15,000-20,000, 46.7% earned Rs. 20,001-25,000, 26.7% earned Rs. 25,001-30,000, and 13.3% had incomes above Rs. 30,000.

Regarding alcohol consumption history, 10% of the experimental group had been drinking for less than five years, 33.3% for 6-10 years, 33.3% for 11-15 years, and 23.3% for 16-20 years. In the control group, 20% had been drinking for less than five years, 33.3% for 6-10 years, 30% for 11-15 years, and 16.7% for 16-20 years.

Section II: Analysis of data related to level of stress among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas

Table 1: Level of stress among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas
N=30, 30

Stress	Experimental		Control	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Moderate	13	43.3%	7	23.3%
High	17	56.7%	23	76.7%

In the experimental group, 43.3% of the sober alcohol dependents had moderate stress and 56.7% of them had high stress. In the control group, 23.3% of the sober alcohol dependents had moderate stress and 76.7% of them had high stress.

Section III: Analysis of data related to level of anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas.

Table 4.9: Level of anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas
N=30, 30

Anxiety	Experimental		Control	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Low	8	26.7%	8	26.7%
Moderate	17	56.7%	22	73.3%
Potentially concerning	5	16.7%	0	0.0%

In the experimental group, 26.7% of the sober alcohol dependents had low anxiety, 56.7% of them had moderate anxiety and 16.7% of them had potentially concerning anxiety. In the control group, 26.7% of the sober alcohol dependents had low anxiety and 73.3% of them had moderate anxiety.

Section IV: Analysis of data related to the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of stress among sober alcohol dependents attending self-help groups in selected areas.

In experimental group, in pretest, 43.3% of the sober alcohol dependents had moderate stress and 56.7% of them had high stress. In the posttest 33.3% of them had low stress and 66.7% of them had moderate stress. In control group, in pretest and posttest, 23.3% of the sober alcohol dependents had moderate stress and 76.7% of them had high stress. This indicates that the stress among sober alcohol dependents improved remarkably after Rational emotive behavior therapy.

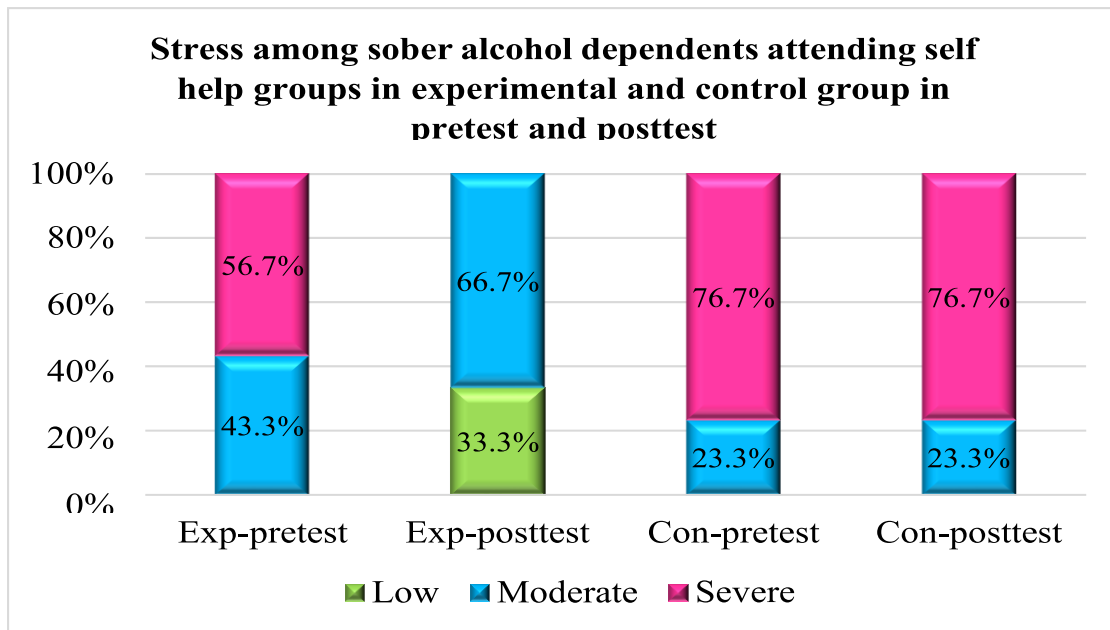


Fig.1 Bar diagram shows description of effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of stress among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas

Paired t-test for the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of stress among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas.

Researcher applied paired t-test for the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of stress among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas. Average stress score in pretest was 26.8 which reduced to 16.6 in posttest. T-value for this test was 20 with 29 degrees of freedom. Corresponding p-value was small (less than 0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. It is evident that the Rational emotive behavior therapy is significantly effective in improving the stress among sober alcohol dependents.

Two sample t-test for comparison of change in stress score among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas in experimental and control group.

Alcohol dependents attending self-help groups in selected areas in experimental and control group. The average change in stress score in experimental group was 10.23 which was 0.03 in control group. T-value for this test was 17 with 58 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was small (less than 0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. It is evident that the Rational emotive behavior therapy is significantly effective in improving the stress among sober alcohol dependents.

Section V: Analysis of data related to the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas.

In experimental group, in pretest, 26.7% of the sober alcohol dependents had low anxiety, 56.7% of them had moderate anxiety and 16.7% of them had potentially concerning anxiety. In the posttest 86.7% of them had low anxiety and 13.3% of them had moderate anxiety. In control group, in pretest, 26.7% of the sober alcohol dependents had low anxiety and 73.3% of them had moderate anxiety. In posttest, 20% of the sober alcohol dependents had low anxiety and 80% of them had moderate anxiety. This indicates that the anxiety among sober alcohol dependents improved remarkably after Rational emotive behavior therapy.

Paired t-test for the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas.

Table 1: Paired t-test for the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas.

N=30

	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Pretest	26.0	9.9	6.6	29	0.000
Posttest	15.3	5.2			

Researcher applied paired t-test for the effectiveness of Rational emotive behavior therapy on level of anxiety among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas. Average anxiety score in pretest was 26 which reduced to 15.3 in posttest. T-value for this test was 6.6 with 29 degrees of freedom. Corresponding p-value was small (less than 0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. It is evident that the Rational emotive behavior therapy is significantly effective in improving the anxiety among sober alcohol dependents.

- **Two sample t-test for comparison of change in anxiety score among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas in experimental and control group.**

Table 2: Two sample t-test for comparison of change in anxiety score among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas in experimental and control group.

N=30, 30

Group	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Experimental	10.7	8.9	6.6	29	0.000
Control	-1.1	4.2			

Researcher applied two sample t-test for comparison of change in anxiety score among sober alcohol dependents attending self help groups in selected areas in experimental and control group. Average change in anxiety score in experimental group was 10.7 which was -1.1 in control group. T-value for this test was 6.6 with 58 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was small (less than 0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. It is evident that the Rational emotive behavior therapy is significantly effective in improving anxiety among sober alcohol dependents.

Section VI: Analysis of data related to association between study findings with selected demographic variables.

Since all the p-values were greater than 0.05, none of the demographic variables showed a statistically significant association with the levels of stress or anxiety among sober alcohol dependents. This indicates that factors such as age, education, family structure, occupation, income, or duration of alcohol consumption did not have a measurable impact on the stress or anxiety levels in this population. These findings suggest that stress and anxiety among sober alcohol dependents are likely influenced by other factors beyond the demographic variables considered in the study.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) on stress levels among sober alcohol dependents attending self-help groups shows significant improvement in the experimental group. In the pretest, 43.3% had moderate stress and 56.7% had high stress. After receiving REBT, 33.3% reported low stress, and 66.7% had moderate stress, indicating a reduction in high stress levels. In contrast, the control group saw no change, with 76.7% continuing to experience high stress.

These results align with previous research that has highlighted the efficacy of REBT in stress management. REBT focuses on helping individuals identify and challenge irrational beliefs, replacing them with healthier, more rational thought patterns. Studies such as David et al. (2017) demonstrate that REBT effectively reduces psychological distress, particularly in individuals with anxiety, stress, and substance use disorders.⁸ Similarly, Hyland et al. (2014) found that cognitive-behavioral interventions like REBT led to significant stress reduction in alcohol dependents, enhancing coping mechanisms and emotional regulation.⁹

The analysis of the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) on anxiety levels among sober alcohol dependents highlights a significant reduction in anxiety in the experimental group. In the pretest, 26.7% had low anxiety, 56.7% had moderate anxiety, and 16.7% had potentially concerning anxiety. Following REBT, 86.7% reported low anxiety, and only 13.3% had moderate anxiety, with no participants experiencing potentially concerning anxiety levels. In contrast, the control group saw little change, with most participants remaining in the moderate anxiety category.

These findings are consistent with other research showing the effectiveness of REBT in reducing anxiety. For example, studies like David et al. (2018) and Ellis (2003) demonstrate that REBT is highly effective in treating anxiety by helping individuals address irrational beliefs and cognitive distortions that fuel anxious responses. REBT encourages individuals to replace these thoughts with more rational, balanced perspectives, leading to improved emotional regulation and a reduction in anxiety symptoms.

In a study by Hyland et al. (2014), cognitive-behavioral interventions, including REBT, showed similar success in reducing anxiety levels among individuals struggling with addiction. These therapies help individuals develop healthier coping mechanisms and diminish the negative emotional impact of stressors, thereby reducing anxiety and improving mental well-being.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) on stress and anxiety levels among sober alcohol dependents attending self-help groups. Findings revealed significant improvements in both stress and anxiety in the experimental group after the intervention. In terms of stress, the experimental group saw a reduction from high and moderate levels pre-intervention to lower levels post-intervention. Similarly, anxiety levels improved drastically, with a notable increase in participants reporting low anxiety after receiving REBT.

In contrast, the control group, which did not receive REBT, showed no significant improvement in either stress or anxiety, highlighting the potential effectiveness of the therapy. Additionally, none of the demographic variables studied (such as age, education, family type, occupation, income, and duration of alcohol consumption) showed any significant association with stress or anxiety levels, suggesting that these factors did not influence the outcome.

This study supports previous research showing that REBT is an effective cognitive-behavioral intervention for reducing emotional distress among individuals with substance use histories. By addressing irrational beliefs and promoting healthier thought patterns, REBT can significantly improve the mental well-being of sober alcohol dependents, facilitating their recovery process and reducing stress and anxiety levels.

Conflict of Interest: The authors certify that they have no involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this paper.

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