Abstract

**Background and Aim:** Prison and prisoners, because of difficulties and barriers they are facing, they are neglected parts of several branches of health context. In the field of mental health there are deficiencies of manuals and guidelines for prison. On the other hand the prevalence and the burden of mental disorders are higher in prisons than general population. The most conducted interventions in prisons is the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). In the last three decades, there have been the third wave of cognitive therapies spreading all around the world. Mindfulness based interventions are several packages that are believed to be effective on wide domains of physical and mental health problems. This treatments are used for several population of prisoners around the world, including mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT). MBCT eventually was developed to treat people with several major depressive episodes. Literature has shown that MBCT is effective on mental and physical health. The aim of present study was to investigate the effects of mindfulness based cognitive therapy on mental health of prisoners.

**Methods:** The present study is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) that was performed February 2019 to march 2020 on 140 prisoners of central prison of Rasht city. They allocated randomly in experimental or control groups. Experimental group received weekly sessions on MBCT for six weeks. The techniques in this group includes some meditation, relaxation and physical movements. On the other hand, control group received CBT alongside with the Exp group in the same time and duration. They received some cognitive techniques using some charts and handouts. Mental health of prisoners assessed with HADS, BDI, GHQ12, PSQI, MAAS and ISI questionnaires. Data was collected before the intervention, and 1 and 6 mounts after the intervention. Repeated Measures Analyses was conducted using SPSS 24.

**Results:** data analyses had shown that the EXP group have greater outcomes in all mental health measures. Mean scores of anxiety, depression, general health, perceived stress, mindfulness score, sleep quality and insomnia severity improved after the intervention that demonstrates positive relation with education for prisoners.

**Conclusion:** the results from this study indicates that the MBCT has promising effects on improving of mental health of prisoners. Because of importance of prisoner's mental health, MBCT could be used widely in prison settings.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Mental Health, MBCT, CBT