|| ISSN(online): 2589-8698 || ISSN(print): 2589-868X ||

Available online on http://www.ijmbs.info

International Journal of Medical and Biomedical Studies; 2025; 9(1); 166-170

Original Research Article

The Influence of Psychological And Behavioral Factors on Temporomandibular Disorders: Exploring the Impact of Stress, Anxiety, and the Efficacy of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Priyanka[1], Samir Kumar[2]

[1]Dental Officer, Sardar Hospital, Hajipur, Vaishali, Bihar, India
[2]Associate Professor, Department of General Medicine, Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Patna, Bihar, India

Received: 02-01-2025 / Revised: 11-01-2025 / Accepted: 29-01-2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.32553/ijmbs.v9i1.3017
Corresponding author: Samir Kumar
Conflict of interest: Nil

Abstract:

Background: Temporomandibular disorders (TMD) are multifactorial conditions characterized by chronic pain and functional limitations in the jaw area, with psychological factors playing a significant role in symptom severity and patient outcomes.

Methods: This prospective observational study involved 110 patients at Sadar Hospital, Hajipur, who underwent Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) targeting stress and anxiety from October 2023 to September 2024. Data were collected at baseline, 6 months, and 12 months, with primary outcomes measuring changes in pain levels, jaw function, and quality of life, while secondary outcomes assessed stress and anxiety reduction.

Results: Significant improvements were observed across all metrics. Pain scores decreased from a mean of 7.2 to 3.1, jaw function impairment reduced from 55% to 20%, and quality of life scores increased from 40 to 70. Anxiety levels showed substantial reductions, decreasing from a mean score of 28 to 8. All changes were statistically significant ($p<0.01$).

Conclusion: The study confirmed the effectiveness of CBT in significantly improving pain, function, and psychological well-being in TMD patients, highlighting the importance of integrating psychological therapies in managing this disorder.

Keywords: Temporomandibular disorders, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Chronic pain, psychological interventions

Introduction

Temporomandibular disorders (TMD) are a group of conditions that cause pain and dysfunction in the jaw joint and muscles controlling jaw movement [1]. These disorders are complex and can be influenced by a variety of physical and psychological factors. While the physical aspects of TMD, such as injury or inflammation, are well-documented, the psychological and behavioral components have garnered increasing attention in recent years. This interest stems from the observation that TMD patients often exhibit higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to the general population [2,3].

Stress and anxiety can exacerbate muscle tension and pain perception, potentially leading to a cycle of discomfort and psychological distress. This relationship suggests that psychological factors not only contribute to the onset of TMD but also to

its persistence and severity. Therefore, understanding the psychological landscape of TMD patients is crucial for effective management and treatment [4,5].

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has emerged as a promising intervention in this context. CBT, a well-established psychological treatment modality, focuses on changing negative thoughts and behaviors that can contribute to and worsen physical health problems [6,7]. For TMD patients, CBT aims to reduce pain perception, improve stress management, and alter behaviors that may be contributing to the disorder [8].

The aim of this study is to explore the interplay between psychological factors and TMD and to assess the efficacy of CBT in treating TMD-related symptoms. By addressing the psychological components of TMD, this research hopes to broaden the scope of effective treatments available to patients and provide a more holistic approach to managing this debilitating condition.

Materials and Methods

Study Design and Setting: This study was a prospective observational analysis conducted at Sadar Hospital, Hajipur, Vaishali, Bihar. The investigation spanned from October 2023 to September 2024, allowing for comprehensive data collection and analysis over one year.

Participants: The study cohort consisted of approximately 110 patients diagnosed with temporomandibular disorders (TMD). Eligible participants were those who presented with symptoms of TMD during the study enrollment period and consented to participate in the research. Exclusion criteria included patients with prior jaw surgery, ongoing psychological therapy not related to TMD, or severe systemic diseases that could influence TMD symptoms.

Intervention: Participants underwent an initial assessment to record baseline levels of stress, anxiety, and TMD symptom severity. Subsequently, they were introduced to a tailored Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) program designed specifically for TMD patients. The CBT program included techniques such as relaxation training, stress management, cognitive restructuring, and pain coping strategies, conducted over multiple sessions throughout the study duration.

Data Collection: Data was collected at three primary points: at baseline (prior to the commencement of CBT), at the midpoint of the study (six months), and after the study (one year). The primary outcomes measured included changes in pain levels, jaw function, and quality of life. Secondary outcomes focused on reductions in reported stress and anxiety levels.

Statistical Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Changes in outcomes over time were assessed using repeated measures ANOVA or equivalent non-parametric tests, depending on the data distribution. The significance level was set at $p<0.05$ for all tests.

Results

The study conducted at Sadar Hospital, Hajipur, evaluated the efficacy of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in treating 110 patients with temporomandibular disorders (TMD) over one year. After the study, the data showed significant improvements across several metrics. Pain levels, measured on a visual analog scale, decreased from an average baseline score of 7.2 to 3.1 by the end of the study. Jaw function, assessed via the Mandibular Function Impairment Questionnaire, improved, with the mean score dropping from 55% impairment at baseline to 20% impairment after one year.

Quality of life, evaluated using the SF-36 health survey, saw overall scores increase from an average of 40 out of 100 at the start of the study to 70 out of 100 at its conclusion. Additionally, levels of stress

and anxiety, measured using the Beck Anxiety Inventory, decreased significantly, with average scores reducing from 28 (moderate anxiety) to 8 (minimal anxiety).

Statistical analyses using repeated measures ANOVA confirmed that the changes in pain levels, jaw function, quality of life, and anxiety levels were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$ for all measured outcomes). These findings not only highlight the clinical effectiveness of CBT in reducing symptoms associated with TMD but also emphasize the role of psychological therapies in managing chronic pain disorders. The integration of CBT into standard care for TMD could potentially lead to broader applications for similar chronic pain conditions.

Table 1: Changes in Pain Levels (Visual Analogue Scale)

Time Point	Mean Pain Score
Baseline	7.2
6 Months	5.1
12 Months	3.1

Table 2: Changes in Jaw Function (Mandibular Function Impairment Questionnaire)

Time Point	Mean Function Impairment (%)
Baseline	55
6 Months	38
12 Months	20

Table 3: Changes in Quality of Life (SF-36 Health Survey)

Time Point	Mean Quality of Life Score
Baseline	40
6 Months	55
12 Months	70

Table 4: Changes in Anxiety Levels (Beck Anxiety Inventory)

Time Point	Mean Anxiety Score
Baseline	28
6 Months	18
12 Months	8

These tables succinctly summarize the study's findings, demonstrating the significant improvements in pain management, jaw function, quality of life, and anxiety reduction throughout the study. The p-values ($p < 0.01$) confirm the statistical significance of these improvements.

Discussion

The results of this study conducted at Sadar Hospital in Hajipur demonstrate a significant improvement in pain levels, jaw function, quality of life, and anxiety among patients with temporomandibular disorders (TMD) treated with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). These findings are consistent with other research that has explored the role of psychological interventions in managing chronic pain conditions. For instance, a study by Aggarwal et al. showed similar improvements in TMD symptoms with CBT interventions, further supporting the notion that psychological therapies can effectively augment traditional pain management strategies [9].

Comparatively, Munoz et al. reported that while CBT significantly improved pain

perception among chronic pain sufferers, the integration of mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques yielded even better outcomes in terms of psychological well-being [10,11]. This suggests that a combined therapeutic approach might be more effective for TMD patients, a hypothesis that could be tested in future studies.

Limitations of the Study: One limitation of the current study is its focus on a relatively homogenous patient population from a single geographic location, which might affect the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the study did not include a control group undergoing a different treatment or placebo, which limits the ability to definitively attribute improvements to CBT.

Future Aspects of the Study: Future research could address these limitations by including a more diverse patient population and employing a randomized controlled trial design to compare CBT with other therapeutic modalities, such as pharmacotherapy or physical therapy [12,13]. Additionally, exploring the long-term effects of CBT on TMD, as well as investigating the potential benefits of combining CBT with other psychological or physical interventions, could provide deeper insights into the optimal management of TMD.

Conclusion

The study conducted at Sadar Hospital in Hajipur conclusively demonstrated that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) significantly improves pain management, jaw function, quality of life, and anxiety levels in patients suffering from temporomandibular disorders (TMD). These findings align with existing literature suggesting that psychological interventions can play a crucial role in the holistic management of chronic pain conditions. Despite its limitations, including the lack of a diverse patient pool and a control group, the results underscore the potential of CBT to be integrated into standard treatment protocols for TMD. Future research should focus on broader application and integration of CBT with other therapeutic modalities, aiming to enhance treatment efficacy and patient outcomes on a larger scale.

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