Introduction

- **Context:** Emotion regulation deficits are increasingly recognized as an underlying mechanism of many disorders (Aldao et al., 2010; Clcadus et al., 2020).
- **Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) holds potential as an effective transdiagnostic treatment for disorders with underlying emotion regulation deficits (Linehan, 2015).**
- **Objective:** Highlight the potential of DBT as a transdiagnostic treatment for common mental health disorders through a systematic review and meta-analysis of extant research.

Highlights

- Emotion regulation (ER) deficits are an underlying mechanism in many disorders.
- We examined DBT as a transdiagnostic treatment for common mental health disorders.
- 13 RCTs of DBT for mental health disorders, and no comorbid personality disorder, were included.
- DBT led to ER improvements and significant effects for depression and eating disorders.
- DBT is an effective treatment for common mental health disorders.

Methods

- Random effects meta-analysis
- Calculated with Hedges $g$ to correct for small sample size
- Subgroup analyses by disorder and for emotion regulation
- Publication bias was assessed using Egger’s Test, visual inspection of funnel plots, and the trim-and-fill procedure (Duval & Tweedie, 2000), which results in an effect size estimate after taking into account publication bias.

Results

- Thirteen RCTs met inclusion criteria ($N = 515$ participants)
- Overall, DBT resulted in a moderate effect on symptom reduction (outliers excluded)
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g = 0.51, \, 95\% \text{ CI} \, [0.30, \, 0.72], \, p < .001
\]
- Improvements on emotion regulation outcomes yielded a small-to-moderate effect
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g = 0.44, \, 95\% \text{ CI} \, [0.12, \, 0.75], \, p < .01
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- Results showed significant effects of DBT on:
  - Depression ($g = 0.44, \, 95\% \text{ CI} \, [0.24, \, 0.65], \, p = .001$)
  - Eating disorders ($g = 0.83, \, 95\% \text{ CI} \, [0.49, \, 1.17], \, p = .001$)
  - But not for anxiety ($g = 0.33, \, 95\% \text{ CI} \, [-0.02, \, 0.67], \, p = .06$)

Conclusions

- **Results suggest DBT skills groups are effective:**
  - Reduced overall psychiatric symptomatology (moderate effect)
  - Emotion regulation (small-to-moderate effect)
  - Symptoms of depression (small-to-moderate effect)
  - Eating disorders (large effect).
  - Not significant for anxiety

- First meta-analysis examining common mental health disorders without co-occurring BPD
- Provide emerging evidence for DBT skills training groups as an effective transdiagnostic treatment modality for treating a range of disorders.
- Future research: explore DBT as a transdiagnostic tool for treating emotion dysregulation & gain precision on both the mechanisms of change and critical components for best-practice guidelines across disorders.

References


