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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL TRAININGS ON REDUCING THE DIVORCE TENDENCY IN WOMEN SEEKING DIVORCE IN ISFAHAN CITY

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ABSTRACT

One of the main topic areas in family consult is to prevent the divorce and family damages. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the cognitive-behavioral treatment in reducing the divorce tendency rate in a sample of the women seeking divorce in Isfahan. It is a quasi-experimental research, including the control and treatment groups. To this end, 30 married women in Isfahan were purposefully selected and divided into two groups of 15 persons each: the treatment group and control group. Both groups are pre-tested and the treatment group received cognitive-behavioral trainings during 8 sessions for one month. However, the control group received no training. In order to measure the divorce tendency rate, the Roswell *et al.*'s divorce tendency questionnaire that has acceptable reliability and validity was used. Finally, the test scores were analyzed using the statistical technique of covariance analysis. The results showed that cognitive-behavioral training has been effective in reducing the divorce tendency rate in the treatment group using the group method at the statistical error level of $P < 0.0001$. Therefore, it can be concluded that cognitive-behavioral trainings using the group method is effective in reducing the divorce tendency rate. These courses may be effective in reducing the family damages, too.

Keywords: *Cognitive-Behavioral Trainings, Divorce Tendency, Divorce*

INTRODUCTION

The first relationships are formed within the families, where the healthy relationships start. Pleasant and relaxing couple relationships are not only the basis for their growth and prosperity, but also heavily influence the growth and prosperity of the children, too (Monjezi *et al.*, 2012). Family can be defined as a group of the relatives that is responsible for socializing the children and meeting the fundamental needs of the society. It is a group of the people, who are related together through the blood, marriage, or child adoption, and live together for an unspecified period of time (Cohen, 2006). Marriage is the basis of the family formation and family is considered a social symbol that is a reflection of the whole society. In a declining society, undoubtedly, family declines; conversely, in a healthy society, the families will be healthy too. However, as soon as the families evolve, it affects the social grounds like any other social organization (Sarookhani, 2009).

There are usually unavoidable conflicts in human beings' relationships. Conflicts may happen in parallel with the love in the couple's relationships. It occurs when the acts of somebody interfere with those of the other one. As the two get closer to each other, conflict increases. Conflicts hurt the family solidarity. The intensity of the conflict causes the aggression, dissension, militancy and finally, the deterioration of the family values. Living in the families that are chaotic due to the conflicts and discords between the parents can have negative effects on the children, which will be emerging in the form of rebellion and violation of social regulation in the future (Soodani *et al.*, 2010).

Divorce and family violence rates increase annually. Unfortunately, analysis of the registered divorce number in 2002 showed 67256 items. This has been 37817 in 1996 that shows 78% growth, that is, the divorce rate has increased from 7.9 in 1996 to 10.4 in 2002. However, there are no authentic statistics for the present decade. If the divorce rate in a society is negligible, it does not mean the prosperous marriage or couple compatibility rates in that society are high. Many couples are mentally divorced; it means that there is no emotional or physical relationship between the spouses and there is a kind of mandatory life with no interaction (Janati *et al.*, 2010).

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Family problems have been increasingly considered in the area of the mental health of the families by changing the traditional society into the industrial and modern society. The high rate of the referral to the family-therapy centers and the increase in the help-seeking behaviors from the specialists is one of the serious problems in the area of the mental health of the family. Official statistics show that unfortunately, Iran is one of the seven countries in terms of the divorce to marriage ratio in the world (Ebrahimi *et al.*, 2011). Nowadays, divorce and its damages are one of the most controversial issues related to the family foundation. Baumrin (2012) defines divorce as the legally sanctioned termination of a legally valid marriage. Divorce is the most important factor of family collapse. Nevertheless, divorce has occurred from the beginning of the social life of human beings and based on the oldest legal documents, it has been considered as a legal act since that time. However, the relative percentage of the divorce has been justifiable all the time and it has not been a serious problem for the society. However, there is an increasing divorce rate in societies (Haghshenas, 2009).

Some troubled families suppose that their problems will be solved by the divorce. However, it should be said that divorce is not the end of the problems and conflicts, but it is a new beginning for the new problems and even more severe damages. Divorce causes men to be uncommitted. Crime statistics show the high number of this kind of people among the prisoners. The divorce effects on women, notably those who have no economic dependence are serious. Divorced women rarely remarry and they may be perverted. The negative effects of divorce on the children may be more severe so that they may experience negative feelings such as disgust that is worse than the orphan ship. Based on the conducted studies, there is a correlation between the parents' divorce and criminal activities of the teenagers. Divorce is common among the penal population and the divorce rate is a criterion for measuring the social instability (Kinia, 1991) so that there are 200 divorce items in every 1000 marriage items based on the official statistics of Iran (Yousefi, 2011).

Haghshenas (2009) considers the romantic marriage expansion, changes in the divorce laws, religious beliefs and religion decline in the developed countries, changing attitudes about the proper roles for the women or sexual equality of the men and women, women's economic independence, cultural distances of the couples, and freedom of sexual relationships as the social and cultural reasons for the divorce rate increase. Bani-Jamali *et al.*, (2004) considers the low age of the marriage for the youth, the economic, social, and cultural poverty, low education level, low job level, parents' unreasonable interference, couple's divorced parents, and financial dependence of the couples on their parents as the factors of the family collapse that threaten the mutual life of the couples. Some scholars believe that the increase in the rate of participation of women in the employment market and facilitating the divorce laws are of the effective factors for the increasing spread of divorce in the modern societies (Bargain *et al.*, 2012).

The negative effects of the divorce are of great importance. Children are suffering from the divorce due to the loss of the financial and emotional security. Negative effects of the divorce on children in all age groups, are substantial, however, these effects differ in different ages. Based on the conducted studies, the negative effects of the divorce are more serious in women compared to the men in many cases (Kalantari, 2011). In order to reduce the couple dissatisfaction and consequently, divorce rate, the effective factors should be considered in the couple's life. Many factors of these facilitate the couple compatibility and satisfaction and some of these cause the problems. These factors may differ based on the characteristics of the people and different situations (Akbari, 2008). Cognitive-behavioral approach in the field of the family therapy is based on the premise that family problems are a combination of cognitive factors resulting from the behavioral inefficient exchanges of the family members such as the communication failure or lack of the problem-solving skills (Toghyani *et al.*, 2005).

Cognitive-behavioral approach includes the focus on the clear behavior, analysis of the current problem and the formulation of a special treatment program. Therapist couple uses this approach by applying the techniques for increasing the positive exchanges of the couples, modifying the communication and problem solving skills, and helping the couples to accept the responsibility for other interventions and behaviors. Moreover, although the role of the therapist is more emphasized (process, measurement, treatment, and evaluation), the therapeutic relationship has been more considered recently, too

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(Faghirpoor, 2004). A study on the problem-solving skills of the family and the couple satisfaction of a number of women who suffered from the couple dissatisfaction showed that problem-solving intervention significantly reduced the couple dissatisfaction rate and improved the communication skills, the resolution of the conflicts, personality characteristics, sexual relationships and communication with family and friends (Abbasi, 2011). Based on this study, this research aimed to reduce the divorce and divorce tendency rates in a sample of women seeking divorce in Isfahan using the cognitive-behavioral approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a classic quasi-experimental design with the control group. In order to carry out the research, 30 women from Isfahan that had referred to the Isfahan counseling centers in 2014 and had been on the brink of the divorce were purposefully selected. After conducting the pretest and analyzing the average homogeneity in the scores of each scale, they were divided into two groups of 15 persons each: the treatment group and control group. The treatment group received cognitive-behavioral trainings during a course of 60 days in 8 sessions of 90 minutes by two senior experts of the family consult. However, the control group received no training. After the end of the sessions, both groups post-tested. The qualification for the people who participate in this study were: age group of 20-50 years-old, informed consent of the person to participate in this research, the minimum level of reading and writing literacy, commitment to take part in the training sessions in the work process.

The content of the training sessions was based on the cognitive-behavioral perspective and the content of this course has been used in the previous sessions. In order to reanalyze the content validity of the training course the specialists and scholars viewpoints in this area were used and eventually, this content was trained.

The content of the training sessions is as follows: first session: acquaintance and introducing the people; second session: coping strategies; third session: teaching problem-solving skills; fourth session: marital skills training; fifth session: training the skills of expressing intimacy, verbal and nonverbal affection; sixth session: Assertiveness skill training; seventh session: decision-making skill training and consultancy within the family; eighth session: conclusion and summarize the all sessions.

Divorce Tendency Questionnaire of Roswell et al.:

This scale of 14 items, which is used for couple who seek the divorce, it has two micro scales that are measured using the seven questions, divorce tendency, and negligence tendency. This questionnaire is graded based on the Likert seven-factor scale from never (1) to always (7). Davoodi (2008) calculated the alpha coefficient for this test 0.81. SPSS software version 22 was used for data analysis and the results were reported as the descriptive and referential statistics. For obtaining the normal data, one - sample Kalmogorov- Smiranov test was used for the parametric tests. In order to compare the pretest and posttest averages of the control and treatment groups, dependent t-test was used and finally, the covariance test was applied for comparing the significant difference in the treatment group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The age range of the treatment group was 35.64 ± 3.77 and that of the control group was 34.88 ± 3.79 . The highest and the lowest age of the participators were 50 and 19, respectively. In order to obtain the normal data, one - sample *Kalmogorov- Smiranov* test was used. The results showed that the research variables were not significant at $P \leq 0.05$. Therefore, the distribution of the research variables is normal and the parametric tests can be carried out. The results of the *Levene's* test in table 1 show that research groups can be compared with each other.

Table 1: The results of Levin test to evaluate the equality of the variances of the two groups

Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
divorce tendency	3.316	1	28	.077

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Table 2: Statistical Properties for Variables in the Pretest, Posttest on the Studied Groups

Groups		Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
Test	Pre-test	divorce tendency	87.40	15	5.93	7.524	14	0.000
	Post-test	divorce tendency	66.37	15	10.06			
Control	Pre-test	divorce tendency	76.53	15	9.98	-0.553	14	0.589
	Post-test	divorce tendency	77.80	15	6.10			

The results of the dependent T test between the control and treatment groups have been reported in order to compare averages in table 2. The results show that the average of the treatment groups is significant in pretest and posttest in a divorce tendency variable. However, there is no significant difference between the averages of the control group in pretest and posttest. The results of dependent T showed that the research groups can be compared with each other, based on this, the covariance analysis is used for analyzing the effectiveness of the brief solution-focused group therapy on the couple burnout improvement.

Table 3: Effectiveness of the trainings on reduce of divorce tendency

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta
Corrected Model	1169.869 ^a	2	584.934	9.041	.001	.401	
Intercept	670.398	1	670.398	10.362	.003	.277	
Pre-test	195.169	1	195.169	3.017	.094	.100	
group	1140.618	1	1140.618	17.630	.000	.395	
Error	1746.831	27	64.697				
Total	158869.000	30					
Corrected Total	2916.700	29					

The results of the covariance analysis showed that there is a significant difference between the treatment group and control group based on the divorce tendency scale and the cognitive -behavioral training has reduced the divorce tendency rate in the women. Therefore, due to the significant differences of the averages of the research variables in the treatment group, divorce tendency variable compared to the control group in table 2, and the significant difference in the covariance test in table 3, it can be concluded that training interferences and the effect of the independent variable causes the new changes. In addition, η^2 shows the impact factor of the cognitive-behavioral training on each of the treatment group variables.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the cognitive-behavioral trainings on the divorce tendency in the women seeking the divorce in Isfahan. The results indicated that cognitive-behavioral group training is effective in reducing the divorce tendency rate. The previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of the cognitive-behavioral treatment on the reducing the divorce tendency rate.

Soleimani (2012) in a study entitled the effectiveness of excitement-focused couple therapy on the couple's conflicts and reduction the divorce tendency rate in the couples who referred to the counseling centers of the Bandar Abbas concluded that using the excitement-focused couple therapy approach has been effective on solving the couple conflicts and reducing the divorce tendency rate. Davoodi *et al.*, (2011) showed that the solution-focused approach is effective in reducing the divorce tendency rate. Yousefi (2011) in his study entitled the effectiveness of the family therapy based on schema therapy and the Bowen's emotional system on the divorce tendency in the referees seeking for the divorce showed that Bowen's emotional system is more effective than the schema therapy approach and plays a key role in reducing the divorce tendency rate. Correy and Pichian mentioned that using the solution-focused approach in treatment group causes the significant reduction in the couple who seek for the divorce after posttest compared to the control group. Markman *et al.*, (1999) concluded that the behavioral insight in the brief therapy has been effective in reducing the couple's problems.

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Dehghani (2011) investigated the effectiveness of the dialogue analysis training on the couple burnout and the improvement of the couple life quality. Esbati (2006) analyzed the effectiveness of the group couple-therapy approach using the cognitive-behavioral method on the intimacy increase and the deterministic thinking increase and realized that using the approach lead to the decrease in the deterministic thinking rate and increase in the couple intimacy. Moreover, Pirfalaki, Soodano and Shafi Abadi (2014) in a study entitled the effectiveness of the cognitive-behavioral group couple therapy on the couple burnout found that kind of treatment can be used for reducing the couple burnout and the family stability.

The results of this study show that in the cognitive-behavioral approach, restructuring the core beliefs are of great importance. Couple's conflicts usually result from the core beliefs (Dattilio, 2005). The core beliefs are the certain patterns that are included in the realities or people's experiences to help them to justify that reality or experience, or they act as the perception mediators and direct their responses (Young *et al.*, 2003). The basis of the cognitive-behavioral approach is to focus on the thinking and perceptions and their effect on the excitements and behaviors (Dattilio, 2005). Dattilio believes that in most cases, these illogical beliefs are the obstacles for the couple who cannot change themselves. Since early in the 1980s, cognitive-behavioral treatment has been used (Baucom *et al.*, 2010). Cognitive-behavioral pattern emphasizes on the excitement and behavioral responses to the life events that are mediated due to the interpretations, and depend on their thinking way. These interpretations can be distorted or may be improper.

CBT therapists help the people to evaluate their realizations actively and modify their negative behavioral interactions in order to improve the recognitions and positive excitements and talk about the couple's problems, inhibited or irregular excitement experiences in order to experience the positive couple's relationships (Epstein and Baucom, 2002).

In fact, CBT is a regular qualitative treatment in which the interactive effects of the recognitions, behaviors, and couple excitement are investigated and can be changed in order to improve the relationship quality (Baucom *et al.*, 2010). In addition, cognitive-behavioral approach helps the couples who are involved with the conflicts and tend to divorce, and often have the cognitive errors, illogical and destructive beliefs to increase their awareness about the illogical beliefs and evidences. Couples modify their false beliefs, which lead to the divorce tendency, by conducting the exercises in the training sessions and the assignments out of the sessions. Since the cognitive-behavioral therapy emphasizes the destructive and false thinking as the main reasons for the emotional, behavioral problems and interpersonal conflicts, the destructive thinking is modified using the different techniques in this kind of treatment (Flanagan and Flanagan, 2004).

Beck *et al.*, (1979) believe that cognitive distortions are the sources of the discontent and contradictions in people life. Beck (2005) states that the different perceptions of the spouses results from a misunderstanding that cause the couple conflict and negative excitements and behaviors. Therefore, using the cognitive-behavioral approaches such as training the behavior change guidelines and cognitive restructuring (Halford, 2004) can decrease the couple's conflicts and improve their relationships (Oltmanns and Emery, 2012).

The implementation of a therapeutic method and the lack of a comparison of the dependent variables with several therapeutic approaches: Therefore, conducting a comparative analysis of the therapeutic methods are suggested for the future studies; The lack of the follow-up test that should be considered in the future studies; Focus on the women and the lack of the comparison with the men. Due to the above-mentioned limitations, the generalizations should be cautiously conducted. For the applied cases, the implementation of this kind of interference studies is recommended for reducing the social damages in order to improve the health and solidarity of the family foundation.

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