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The investigation and comparison of the efficacy of emotionally focused couple therapy and solution focused couple therapy on reducing fear of intimacy and increasing couples' sexual satisfaction

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Abstract

This research was conducted to aim investigate and compare the training of emotionally focused couple therapy and solution focused couple therapy on reducing fear of intimacy and increasing couples' sexual satisfaction. This research was the type of quasi-experimental of type with pretest, posttest and follow-up with the control group. The population of this study is consisted 30 couples referred to counseling centers (Grohamrah and Mehravar) in Tehran city. Scale (FIS) and that were assigned randomly to three group emotionally focused therapy couple (10 couples), solution focused therapy couples (10 couples), and control group (10 couples). The experiment groups participated in 8 sessions of 90-minutes of emotionally focused couple therapy and solution focused couple therapy, and they were assessed in the fear of intimacy and sexual satisfaction variables three stages of pretest, posttest and follow-up (two-month). The data were analyzed by repeated measures analysis of variance (mixed). The results showed that the emotionally focused couple therapy and solution focused couple therapy are effective in decreasing the fear of intimacy and increasing sexual satisfaction, and also the group of emotionally focused couple therapy more affective than the group of solution focused couple therapy. Therefore, the group training of emotionally focused couple therapy and solution focused couple therapy can be used as an effective therapeutic methods to increase intimacy and sexual satisfaction in couples.

Keywords: Emotionally-focused, solution-focused, fear of intimacy, sexual satisfaction, couples

Extended Abstract

Introduction

The need to establish and maintain connections and close relationships with others is considered to be the basic and fundamental motive of mankind

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(Miri, Miri, Sharifzade, & Miri, 2014). Most people consider marriage as the most intimate adulthood relationship; a relationship that is the main source of affection and support for them (Falazade, Sanani Zaker, & Farzad, 2013). Therefore, the ability to create intimacy is an interpersonal factor, whose importance is often due to its fundamental role in the development of close relationships, and its relationship with marital satisfaction (Montesi, Conner, Gordon, Fauber, Kim, & Heimberg, 2013). Satisfaction with sexual relationship is one of the important factors in marital life satisfaction, and those who have more sexual satisfaction significantly report more quality of life than those who do not have sexual satisfaction (Yung & Lurise, 1998). Therefore, any disorder, which leads to inconsistency and, consequently, dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship, can lead to marital dissatisfaction (Constantine, Graham, Portman, Rosen, & Kingsberg, 2015). Considering the cultural diversity in Iran and as a result of confrontation of new values with ethnic and indigenous values, and the young Age Pyramid of the country's population and, consequently, cultural, social and economic problems in marriages, it seems that in the near future the demand for couple therapy will be increased. Therefore, the need for new and diverse patterns and approaches for couple therapy interventions, which are proportional to the cultural context of the society, is increasing; the Solution-Focused Couple Therapy approach, according to its specific nature and its focus on solutions not on problems, which is one of the basic components of Iran demographics, can be used as one of the most effective and useful therapeutic approaches. One of the other therapies for couples is the emotionally-focused therapy. Johnson and Greenberg introduced their therapeutic strategies and interventions in nine steps in 1985; in this model, it is assumed that the psychological and interpersonal status that couples have in their interactions is organized through the individual emotional experiences of each of the couples (Badihi Zeraati & Mousavi, 2016). Therefore, it is important that with considering the importance of intimacy in couples' life, attention should be paid to improving sexual satisfaction and couples' intimacy; in this way, an important step can be taken towards improving marital satisfaction and, as a result, improving family function. The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the efficacy of emotionally focused couple therapy and solution focused couple therapy on reducing fear of intimacy and increasing couples' sexual satisfaction.

Method

The present study was a quasi-experimental design with pretest, posttest and follow-up with a control group. The population of this study was consisted of the couples referred to Grohamrah and Mehravar counseling centers (345 couples) from September to November of 2016 in Tehran city. 30 couples (60 husbands and wives) were selected according to the included into the research, marriage history of more than 5 years, age 30 to 40 years old, being together in a house, not taking psychiatric drugs, not attending other psychotherapy sessions, and willingness to voluntarily participate in

the sessions of the research and 10 couples were assigned randomly to the group of solution focused therapy couples, and 10 couples to the group of emotionally focused therapy couple, and 10 couples the control group. The study groups received 8 sessions of solution focused couple therapy and emotionally focused couple therapy, and the control group received no therapy; after the end of the therapies, the pretest and posttest were taken of all of the three groups, and after 2 months and in the follow-up stage, all of the three groups were investigated using the pear of intimacy scale and Larson sexual satisfaction questionnaire.

Findings

The results of repeated measures analysis of variance showed that there is a significant difference in the study groups at the three stages of measurement in the fear of intimacy and sexual satisfaction variables ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the level of this effect "practical significance" in the fear of intimacy variable was 0.86 and in the sexual satisfaction variable was 0.79; that is, 86 percent of the total variance or individual differences in reducing fear of intimacy in couples and also 79 percent of the total variance or individual differences in increasing Sexual satisfaction in couples can be attributed to training methods. This finding suggests that fear of intimacy in the experiment groups has been reduced compared to the control group, and sexual satisfaction in this groups has been increased compared to the control group. In the following stage, the results of the comparison of Tukey follow-up tests showed that solution focused couple therapy and emotionally focused couple therapy are not superior to each other in reducing fear of intimacy and improving sexual satisfaction; however, these two therapies are effective in reducing fear of intimacy and improving sexual satisfaction comparing to the control group ($P < 0.001$).

Discussion

According to the findings of this research, it can be argued that solution focused therapy uses the resources and capabilities of the patients in the process of change, and this creates an image of hope in the patients. Therefore, the feeling of self-sufficiency and autonomy is strengthened in the patients (Hoseini et al., 2013). This is done by empowering patients to create solutions and structuring these solutions. The solution focused therapy for couples reminds problem-solving skills to them when they are needed, enable them to eliminate the defected cycle of the problem and develop long-term solutions. A change in one of the couples leads to the change of other people in the system (Johnson et al., 2018). Previous findings suggest that emotionally focused therapy has a promising and compelling effect, and the rate of couples' recovery with marital disturbances has been reported between 70% and 73% (Johnson, 2007). In addition, the lack of intimate relationships between women and men is related to the lack of expression of emotions, feelings and lack of awareness of their feelings. Therefore, women always feel embarrassment, shame and fear in having an intimately close

relationship with their husbands, which is why they are dissatisfied with marriage. Therefore, the application of the emotionally focused approach to women regarding adaptation to these feelings and awareness of them can help to establish close and intimate relationships with their husbands (Ghaderi et al., 2015), which makes it easy to ask for support and relaxation for cool couples. Also the levels of marital intimacy, mutual trust, and their marital adjustment will be increased (Falahzade et al., 2013).

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