

Research Paper

The Effectiveness of Affective-reconstructive Couple Therapy in Increasing the Trust and Marital Satisfaction of Couples With Remarriage



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 Affective-reconstructive couple therapy, Trust in close relationships, Marital satisfaction, Remarriage

ABSTRACT

Objectives This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of affective-reconstructive couple therapy in increasing the trust in close relationships and marital satisfaction of couples with remarriage and divorce experience.

Methods This is a single-case experimental study with a non-concurrent multiple baseline design. Three distressed couples were selected from among couples with remarriage and divorce experience referred to private and government counseling centers in Ahvaz, Iran, based on inclusion/exclusion criteria using purposive sampling method during September-December 2018, They participated at eight sessions of affective-reconstructive couple therapy, once a week each 90 minutes. They completed the Trust in Close Interpersonal Relationships Questionnaire and Marital Satisfaction Scale before and after treatment, and at the follow-up period. The data analysis was conducted by using visual analysis (graph drawing), reliable change index, recovery rate formula (increase rate), and normative comparison methods.

Results Affective-reconstructive couple therapy increased the trust in close relationships and marital satisfaction in couples after treatment and at the follow-up period.

Conclusion Affective-reconstructive couple therapy, due to special attention to the couples' past relationships and increasing their insight into the causes of distress development in relationship can increase the trust in close relationships and marital satisfaction in remarried couples with divorce experience.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Remarriage is a chance for individuals who have lost a spouse to experience married life once more. This is increasingly becoming a normative event in different societies such that in almost half of today's marriages, one or both couples have a previous marriage experience. Couples with remarriage report higher levels of conflicts,

incompatibility, and tensions compared to those in a first marriage which is the result of unique dynamism within such families. Working with remarried couples has different difficulties and challenges, compared to working with couples who are in a first marriage. For this reason, the counselor needs to take into account these apparent differences.

2. Method

This is a single-case experimental study with a non-concurrent multiple baseline design. Three distressed couples

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were selected during September-December 2018 from among couples with remarriage and divorce experience referred to private and government counseling centers in Ahvaz, Iran using purposive sampling method and based on inclusion criteria (age 25-45 years, no any mood disorder, no drug addiction, having at least one year of married life, having at least a high school diploma, ability to speak in Farsi fluently, and willingness to participate in the study), the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-5 score, and having a Marital Satisfaction Scale score <22 [21]. The exclusion criteria were: being first-married, taking psychiatric medications, receiving other therapies concurrently, and tending to get divorced or separated. The couples received affective-reconstructive couple therapy in eight 90-min sessions once a week. The trust in close relationships and marital satisfaction variables were measured in 3, 5, and 8 sessions. In addition, a 45-days follow-up was conducted after the end of treatment. The measurements were carried out using the Trust in Close Interpersonal Relationships Scale (1985), and Marital Satisfaction Scale (2010) at baseline, after intervention, and at follow-up period. Data were analyzed by using visual analysis (graph drawing), Reliable Change Index (RCI), recovery rate formula (increase rate), and normative comparison.

3. Results

The findings of this study concerning 'trust in close relationships' variable showed that the mean baseline score was 67.75 for the first couple, 68.33 for the second couple, and 69.25 for the third couple, while the mean posttest scores increased to 87, 87.16, and 89.66 for the first, second, and third couples, respectively. At the follow-up stage, the mean scores were increased by 28%, 27%, and 29% for the first, second, and third couples, respectively. In the follow-up stage, the differences were significant (>25%) for the three couples.

The RCI values after intervention and at the follow-up stage were obtained 2.36 and 3.22, 2.31 and 3.45, and 2.50 and 3.34 for the first, second, and third couples, respectively. This change in this index was significant in the three couples ($Z=1.96$, $P<0.05$). These findings demonstrate that affective-reconstructive couple therapy has an important effect on the trust within close relationships compared to the baseline scores.

The mean score for marital satisfaction at baseline was obtained 33.25, 3.16, and 34.87 for the first, second, and third couples, respectively. This score increased to 42.83 in the first, 43.33 in the second, and 42.16 in the third couples after intervention. In the follow-up stage, it was 48.5, 48, and 42.5 for the first, second, and third couples, respectively, indicating more increase in comparison with the baseline and post-

test scores. The increase in marital satisfaction after intervention and at the follow-up stage were 29% and 46% for the first couple, 30% and 44% for the second couple, and 24% and 22% for the third couple, respectively. The mean posttest RCI values of the first, second, and third couples were 3.23, 3.43, and 2.46, respectively. These changes were significant for all couples after intervention and at the follow-up stage ($Z=1.96$, $P<0.05$), indicating that the significant effect of affective-reconstructive couple therapy, where its effect was higher on the second couple and lower on the third couple.

4. Discussion

This study was an attempt to examine the effect of affective-reconstructive couple therapy on trust in close relationships and marital satisfaction of remarried couples with divorce experience. Result from visual analysis and clinical significance demonstrated that affective-reconstructive couple therapy had a significant effect on their trust in close relationships and marital satisfaction. Identifying and normalizing the distinctive factors in remarriage such as the pain due to loss of previous marriage, and the fantasies and expectations that come with it is an important key to successful interventions for couples with remarriages.

Affective-reconstructive couple therapy reflects an insight-oriented approach to couple therapy, where it is assumed that the couples' current problems often stem from their damage from previous relationships. Such damages can lead to a sustained interpersonal vulnerability and related defense strategies that impede emotional intimacy. When one becomes aware of the origin of one's dysfunctional patterns, life and relationships take on a new meaning for her/him. A process that is applied mutually on both couples gradually provides them with efficient tools to be able to put aside their negative interactions and inappropriate personality traits.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles are considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages; they were also assured about the confidentiality of their information.

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This study was extracted from the PhD. thesis of the second author, Department of Counselling, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Shahid Chamran University.

Authors contributions

Conceptualization, investigation: all authors; Methodology, writing – review & editing: Gholamreza Rajabi; Writing – original draft: Gholamreza Rajabi, Ghasem Khoshnoud; Funding acquisition, resources: Ghasem Khoshnoud; Supervision: Gholamreza Rajabi, Mansour Soudani, Reza Khojastehmehr.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest

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