

Comparing the Efficacy of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy and Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy in Reducing Post-Traumatic Stress in Women Affected by Infidelity

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Extended Abstract

Aim

People affected by infidelity exhibit symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder; these cases require individualized psychological interventions. Therefore, the objective of this study was to compare the efficacy of emotion-oriented couple therapy and cognitive-behavioral couple therapy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in women affected by infidelity.

Methodology

This research is applicable in terms of its purpose and semi-experimental data collection method, which includes a pre-test-post-test-follow-up (30-day) design and control group. In the first three months of 2019, 69 women referred to the Sib counseling center in Mashhad after their spouses violated their marriage vows comprised the statistical population of the present study. On the basis of comparable studies, the sample size for each group was estimated to be 15 individuals. Random replacement of samples in the intervention and control groups was performed. Among women who had been referred to the counseling center due to their husband's breach of vow, sampling was conducted using a purpose-based method and based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Cognitive-behavioral group: Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy group participants attended twelve sessions at the counseling center. The group sessions for emotive couple therapy consisted of eight consecutive sessions. Each session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and took place twice per week. All meetings were conducted with couples present. The Impact of Event Scale (IES) was administered to all three groups before, after, and two months after intervention. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS-20 statistical software and statistical techniques for analysis of variance of duplicate data.

Findings

Comparing the demographic status of research samples from the intervention and control groups reveals that the three groups are homogeneous in terms of age, length of marriage, level of education, and number of children ($P < 0.05$). At the pre-test stage, the average of the three groups did not differ significantly; however, at the post-test stage, the scores in the intervention groups decreased, while the control group showed no significant changes. In cognitive-behavioral couple therapy and emotion-oriented couple therapy, compared to the control group, the scores for post-traumatic stress decreased significantly. Cognitive couple therapy was more effective than therapy with an emotional focus ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that both couples therapy and individual therapy can be utilized to enhance the condition of women affected by infidelity. Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy was more effective in treating post-traumatic stress than emotion-focused couple therapy. It is suggested that the treatment sessions be designed so that children and adolescents can also participate, as this issue frequently involves the entire family, and children and adolescents experience considerable dread and confusion in this regard. In addition to a follow-up in order to evaluate the participants, it is suggested that the demonstrated techniques be reviewed at intervals of several months and that clients' feedback be solicited again in order to address the obstacles and problems. Due to the prevalence of corona disease, the majority of treatments are administered online. However, there is no information about the difference in efficacy between the online and face-to-face treatments used in this study, and additional research is required in this area.

Keywords: Cognitive-Behavioral, Couple Therapy, Emotion-Oriented, Infidelity, Stress.