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Comparison of the Effectiveness of Affective Reconstructive and Emotion-Focused Therapy in Marital Problems and Forgiveness in Women Who Filed for a Divorce

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Child marriage or early marriage, defined as any marriage before the age of 18, is a manifestation of gender inequality (UNICEF, 2019), leading to lifelong negative consequences for the health, well-being, and rights of millions of teenage girls (Malhotra & Elnakib, 2020). Although constructive interactions between spouses and social norms typically facilitate the evolution of marital relationships (Sevinc & Sibel Garip, 2016), various personal, social, emotional, and psychological factors can undermine their stability and cohesion (Amato & Marriott, 2007). Today, approximately one out of every three girls globally marries before the age of 18 (United Nations Population Fund, 2016), with about 650 million women currently alive married before 18 and approximately 250 million married before 15 (UNICEF, 2019). According to the Statistical Center of Iran (2020), in 2019, 28,189 girls aged 10-14 and 144,685 girls aged 15-19 were married, with an increase to 16,381 girls in 2020. In Ardabil province, 37% of marriages in 2019 involved girls aged 10-14, and 42% included girls under 19, with child marriage divorces constituting 30% of marriages involving girls under 20 (official website of Ardebil province, 2019). Women filing for divorce encounter numerous challenges post-separation, necessitating appropriate therapeutic interventions.

The aim of this study was to compare the effectiveness of Emotional Reconstruction-Based Therapy and Emotion-Focused Therapy on marriage problems and forgiveness in women who filed for divorce.

Methodology

The research utilized an applied purpose with a semi-experimental research design involving pre-test-post-test with a control group and a follow-up stage. The statistical population included all women who filed for divorce in Ardabil with a history of early marriage (less than 18 years) in 2021. From this population, 45 individuals were selected through purposive sampling and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (15 individuals each). Research instruments included the Interpersonal Forgiveness Scale (IF-25) (Ehteshamzadeh et al., 2011) and the Marriage Problems Questionnaire (PMQ) (Seifi Ghozlu., 2022). Interventions consisted of therapy sessions based on Affective Reconstruction (Snyder & Mitchell, 2008) and Emotion-Focused Therapy (Greenberg, 2014), each consisting of eight sessions lasting 90 minutes, conducted once a week. Data analysis was performed using multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and Bonferroni post hoc test in SPSS software version 22.

Findings

The results indicated that Emotional Reconstruction-Based Therapy was effective in reducing marriage problems and increasing forgiveness in women who filed for divorce. Similarly, Emotion-Focused Therapy was effective in reducing marriage problems and increasing forgiveness in these women. Consequently, both Affective Reconstruction and Emotion-Focused Therapy were effective in increasing forgiveness and reducing marriage problems in women who filed for divorce, with Affective Reconstruction therapy demonstrating significantly higher effectiveness compared to Emotion-Focused Therapy.

Conclusion

This study utilized two empirically supported therapeutic treatments and found both to be effective in reducing marital problems and enhancing forgiveness. Thus, given the low forgiveness rates and high marital problems in women filing for divorce, Affective Reconstruction and Emotion-Focused Therapies, or a combination thereof, can ameliorate forgiveness rates and marital issues.

Keywords: Divorce, Forgiveness, Marriage Problems, Women.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout all stages of this research, ethical considerations have been paramount, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, protection of collected information, and appropriate data usage.

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Ethical Approval

This study (IR.UMA.REC.1400.040) was approved by Mohaghegh Ardebil University. Participants were briefed on the study's objectives, assured of data confidentiality, and provided informed consent.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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