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The Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy for Trauma on Executive Functions in individuals with Sexual Trauma (Case Report)

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Extended Abstract

Aim

The research literature provides evidence that sexual abuse survivors are at greater risk for future victimization than the general population. This phenomenon is called sexual re-victimization. Research has shown that survivors of childhood sexual abuse have a higher risk of future sexual victimization than those without a history of abuse. It is possible that the executive functions component is weak in survivors of sexual abuse (Maniglio, R., 2015). Therefore, the objective of our research is to assess the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy for Trauma on executive functions in individuals with sexual trauma.

Methodology

The research method was practical in purpose, the data collection was quantitative and experimental, and the target population was all the sexually assaulted individuals who referred to the Iran Trauma Institute in Mashhad in 2021 (ten people, including six women and four men). Three women who met the entry criteria were selected as samples. In this research, the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) and the Emotional Visual Working Memory Capacity (EVWMC) were used (Moradi et al., 2008). Data analysis was conducted using visual analysis of the graphs of the changes in the research variables and the effect size of each variable on the clients, as well as the percentage of improvement and the percentage of reduction in their score changes through the relevant formulas using SPSS 26 software.

Findings

The research method was practical in purpose, the data collection was quantitative and experimental, and the target population was all the sexually assaulted individuals who referred to the Iran Trauma Institute in Mashhad in 2021 (ten people, including six women and four men). Three women who met the entry criteria were selected as samples. In this research, the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) and the Emotional Visual Working Memory Capacity (EVWMC) were used (Moradi et al., 2008). Data analysis was conducted using visual analysis of the graphs of the changes in the research variables and the effect size of each variable on the clients, as well as the percentage of improvement and the percentage of reduction in their score changes through the relevant formulas using SPSS 26 software.

Conclusion

EFTT has shown statistical and clinical improvement in working memory executive function and visual-emotional active memory ability in sexual trauma survivors over 11 months (44 sessions). Based on the findings, we could acknowledge that the recovery of sexually abused individuals was due to breaking the cycle of avoiding the experience of negative and unacceptable emotions and destructive repetitive wounds. This occurred during the treatment process, through rebuilding the client's damaged attachment, focusing on identity issues, and simultaneously on self-enhancement (SELF) to assert one's rights and achieve one's unfulfilled needs (Herman, 1996). In all sessions, learning to accept, understand, and process emotions, and the elimination of the victim's emotional dysregulation, led to an increase in the recovery of active memory capacity (Bari & Robbins, 2013). In fact, EFTT improved the executive function of working memory capacity in sexually traumatized individuals from a clinical point of view and led to the prevention of sexual revictimization.

Keywords: Emotion-Focused Therapy for Trauma, Sexual Trauma, Sexual Revictimization, Working Memory.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. It was not necessary to record the participants' names. Informed and written consent was obtained from the participants. Integrity and honesty were maintained throughout the research and in its reporting. Participants were assured that their information would remain completely confidential. After the proposal was approved, the ethical code IR.UT.PSYEDU.REC.1402.001 was obtained from the Scientific-Research Committee of the University of Tehran.

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Conflict of Interest

This article is an excerpt from a doctoral thesis and was conducted without financial support from any organization or entity. There is no conflict of interest.

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