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Effectiveness of Meta Cognitive Interpersonal Approach Training on Rumination and Self-Esteem in Betrayed Women

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Marital infidelity refers to any sexual or emotional relationship outside the boundaries of a committed relationship between two spouses (Weiser & Weigel, 2015). It can have devastating consequences for the individual who engaged in infidelity, their spouse, the marital relationship, the nuclear family, and even extended family members (Moulds et al., 2020). One of the most significant psychological challenges experienced by a betrayed spouse is rumination—persistent, negative thoughts and emotions about the betrayal. These can be intense, uncontrollable, and disruptive to daily functioning, concentration, and attention, ultimately impairing personal performance (Qahari, 2021). Self-esteem is defined as the experience of feeling appropriate to life and its demands. Specifically, self-esteem involves:

1. Confidence in one's ability to think and address life's fundamental challenges.
2. Confidence in one's right to be happy, coupled with a sense of worthiness, entitlement, and the ability to assert one's needs and enjoy the fruits of one's efforts (Branden, 2021).

Given that the initial psychological response of betrayed women often includes rumination with self-blaming thoughts, which subsequently diminishes their self-esteem (Heydari et al., 2022), the way individuals interpret and perceive life challenges plays a critical role in exacerbating rumination and lowering self-esteem. According to Dimaggio et al. (2015), the metacognitive interpersonal approach highlights the importance of addressing:

1. Metacognitive distortions.
2. Promoting separation or differentiation.
3. The nature and characteristics of schemas.
4. Destruction of maladaptive parts and reconstruction of healthy ones.
5. Depicting individuals and their issues as part of a continuous cycle.
6. Using techniques to modify thoughts, mood, and behavior.

Given the emotional, psychological, social, and economic burden of infidelity, as well as the pivotal role of betrayed women in mitigating its long-term complications, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of metacognitive interpersonal approach training on rumination and self-esteem in betrayed women.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest framework and a control group. The statistical population consisted of all the women who sought to the counseling clinic in Isfahan in 2021 due to their husband's infidelity. A sample of 30 women was selected based on inclusion criteria and randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group and a control group (15 participants in each group). Participants completed the Ruminative Response Scale (RS) (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) both before and after the intervention. The experimental group underwent eight 90-minute group training sessions in metacognitive interpersonal therapy (Dimaggio et al., 2015). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, including multivariate and univariate analyses of covariance, using SPSS-25 software.

Findings

Descriptive analysis revealed that the average rumination scores in the experimental group significantly decreased in the post-test compared to the pre-test, whereas in the control group, these scores increased in the post-test compared to the pre-test. Regarding self-esteem, the experimental group showed a significant increase in scores in the post-test compared to the pre-test, while the control group experienced a decrease. The results of the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) indicated a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Further analysis showed that the adjusted mean rumination scores of participants, based on group membership (experimental vs. control), in the post-test stage were significantly different, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), well below the threshold of 0.05. This confirms a significant difference between the two groups, supporting the first hypothesis that the metacognitive interpersonal approach effectively reduces rumination in betrayed women.

Similarly, the adjusted mean self-esteem scores of participants, based on group membership, also showed a significant difference in the post-test stage, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). This confirms the second hypothesis, demonstrating that the metacognitive interpersonal approach effectively enhances self-esteem in betrayed women.

Conclusion

The results of the study on the impact of interpersonal metacognitive therapy on rumination and self-esteem in betrayed women revealed significant differences between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups in both rumination and self-esteem variables. The first hypothesis, stating that the metacognitive interpersonal approach affects rumination in betrayed women, was supported. This finding aligns with various studies, including those by Mustafaei et al. (2018), Moradi et al. (2018), and others. The method, rooted in cognitive-behavioral therapy, helps individuals identify the cycles of rumination and cognitive distortions, thus reducing unhelpful beliefs and negative thinking. Metacognitive therapy promotes self-awareness, enabling individuals to improve emotional well-being and relationship quality. Regarding the second hypothesis, the metacognitive interpersonal approach was also found to positively impact self-esteem. For individuals with low self-esteem, strategies such as identifying cognitive distortions and engaging in cognitive reconstruction are particularly beneficial (Dimaggio et al., 2015). This is consistent with previous research indicating that cognitive restructuring and understanding emotional damage can help boost self-esteem in betrayed women.

Lastly, while this approach is beneficial for enhancing interpersonal relationships and reducing psychological distress, further research is needed to evaluate its effectiveness across diverse populations and gender groups.

Keywords: Marital Infidelity, Meta Cognitive Interpersonal Therapy, Rumination, Self-Esteem.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure adherence to research ethics, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the intervention program. Participants were fully informed about each stage of the intervention. Additionally, members of the control group were assured that they would have the

opportunity to receive the same training intervention upon the conclusion of the research process, should they wish to do so.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this study.

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