

The effect of coping skills training on Dysfunctional Attitudes and happiness in divorced women

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of coping skills training on Dysfunctional Attitudes and happiness in divorced women. The study method was based on the nature of the subject and the objectives of the study was the experimental research method. Statistical population of the study consisted of all divorced women referred to counseling and Rahyaf psychological services center in the first half of 2016 in Bam, and 34 of the target population were randomly selected as the target population and according to the including criteria, as well as socioeconomic status, age and duration of marital life were divided into two equal groups. Then, one of the groups was randomly assigned to the intervention group and the other one to the control group. After performing the pre-test (dependent variables) on both groups, the intervention group was exposed to the interventional variable (in the current study coping skills training) for 10 sessions and after the completion of the intervention, the post-test (dependent variables) was implemented on the two groups. At the end, the data were analyzed using multivariate analysis and the results showed that the intervention was effective on the variables studied. Regarding the findings, it can be concluded that coping skills training is very helpful in promoting the mental health of women who have experienced a divorce crisis.

Keywords: coping skills, Dysfunctional Attitudes, happiness

Introduction

The study of the divorce and the factors affecting it are among the issues that have been in great interest of many social thinkers in recent decades ^[1]. Divorce in various dimensions has an increasing impact on human life. It can be defined as the dissolution of spousal relationship in a permanent marriage, which after it, there won't be a responsibility for two spouses in

terms of respect for marital rights and duties ^[2]. As the bond between people is established based on tradition and official and social contracts, if the parties cannot live together because of various personality, environment, and social reasons, they must inevitably be separated according to the rules and regulations ^[3]. Divorce, one of the most disturbing social phenomena, shrinks the pillars of the family and has more devastating effects on the children ^[4]. Divorce, while breaking down the warm and calming center of life which has irreparable effects on the family members, results in a dramatic decline in happiness ^[5]. In the literature, "good personal life" has been substituted with the happiness. The happiness can be defined as the kind of evaluation that a person has of himself and his life ^[6], and includes things like life satisfaction, positive excitement, lack of depression and anxiety ^[7]. According to Washir, happiness is essentially based on judgment of individuals and can be viewed from two pleasurable and prosperous points of view. In a pleasure-oriented approach, happiness means maximizing the pleasure and minimizing the pain and suffering, and in the

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prosperous approach, happiness is to identify the virtues and potentials of the inner world and then the life in accordance with them ^[8].

Dysfunctional Attitudes that are acquired through experience in relation to oneself and the world, prepare the individual to interpret certain situations overly negative and dysfunctional. According to Beck, Dysfunctional Attitudes are rigorous and perfectionist criteria that a person uses to judge himself and others. Since, these attitudes are inflexible, extreme and resistant to change, they are considered inefficient or infertile ^[9]. Dysfunctional Attitudes are biased assumptions and beliefs that a person has towards himself, the world around and the future. These attitudes lead to biased individual perceptions of events and affect their feelings and behaviors, and predispose individuals to depression and other psychological disorders ^[10]. If a person has a perfectionist and inflexible view of the world, he will use non-adaptive strategies such as avoidance or denial when confronted with a stressful situation that disturbs his previous views. Therefore, it can be said that those who hold these inflexible beliefs are more exposed to psychological trauma when faced with a stressor ^[11]. Negative thoughts and attitudes followed by negative emotions lead to neglect. A person with Dysfunctional Attitudes avoids experiencing exhausting emotions by choosing inefficient responses ^[12].

Negative thoughts and attitudes followed by negative emotions are a factor in neglect. A person with Dysfunctional Attitudes avoids experiencing exhausting and exhausting emotions by choosing inefficient responses ^[12].

Coping skills are the thoughts and behaviors that are used when an individual experiences a stressful event ^[13]. Coping skills include constant changes in people's thinking and behavior to manage internal or external pressures. These skills are one of the most important sources of mental health care and prevention of mental disorders. Coping is a dynamic and active process that constantly changes. Whenever a person is inconsistent or unbalanced in dealing with new things in life and his previous ways of dealing with life issues cannot meet his new position, these skills could eliminate that imbalance ^[14]. Researchers in this field believe that coping methods can be considered as intellectual and behavioral attempts to manage internal and external changes, because these changes cause stress in the individual, and coping is a way to control these stresses. Therefore, coping is an active and dynamic process that must constantly change based on environmental changes ^[15].

Based on the literature, training these skills could enhance and improve the psychological abilities of individuals and increase their control over life. Therefore, the scientific study of the role of coping skills in preventing the consequences of divorce will provide important and useful information that can be applied to psychological interventions and post-divorce education.

Boer *et al.* (2018) studied the effectiveness of divorced women's communication skills and their impact on women's happiness. The results of the research showed that coping skills were more effective in group therapy on life satisfaction, happiness and optimism, individual growth and development, positive

relationship with others, and self-esteem than that of individual treatment ^[16].

Landau *et al.* (2018), in their study, examined the effect of coping and resilience skills on increasing the self-efficacy of divorced women. They believed that all types of mental health problems, such as depression and loss of life expectancy, reduce the amount of tolerance. By studying the tolerance among divorced women two groups of experiment and control, they concluded that learning tolerance skills has increased life expectancy, self-efficacy and reduced the depression among divorced women ^[17].

Osman Bulkan (2017) studied the impact of coping skills on the level of self-flourishing of divorced women. According to Bulkan, divorce is a major event in human life that causes mental impact. Research results showed that coping skills training using an effective mental program has led to a significant increase in self-flourishing but the speed of this increase is slow ^[18].

Schneider *et al.* (2017) investigated the role of coping skills in the economic level of divorced women. According to Schneider *et al.*, structural and functional change in the family foundation has changed the role of family members and behavioral patterns and they concluded that learning coping skills has increased the social economic level of women and achieving the interior support in their lifestyles ^[19].

Farrell *et al.* (2016) investigated the effectiveness of coping skills on the happiness of divorced women. After performing pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests, it was concluded that coping skills training leads to increased happiness in divorced women. As a result, the divorced woman is able to accept responsibility of her social role without being harmed by herself and others, and to deal with the challenges and problems of daily life after the divorce, effectively. Successful learning of the life skills causes increased happiness and the ability to recognize the weaknesses, strengths, desires, needs, and realistic presumption of oneself which together these factors are effective in maintaining the mental health of the person and his happiness ^[20].

Cheti and Huki (2015) in their study examined the effectiveness of self-awareness skills training in increasing the rate of happiness in divorced woman. The results showed that self-awareness skills training is effective on improving the communication ability of divorced women. Also, the results indicated that self-awareness skills can lead to use their experience, empathy, and pain for investigating more appropriate approaches to reduce the consequences of divorce. Having proper personal relationships points to the ability of performing life affairs well after divorce, self-satisfaction, and others ^[21].

Ghorbanalipour *et al.* (2018), in their research, examined the effectiveness of the reality therapy on happiness and hope in divorced women. Divorced women learnt that their happiness and their future success are not in the bitter past but in their own hands, and they can make their future as they like. The reality therapy teaches divorced women that happiness or misery of today is not due to the behavior and actions of others,

but we are the cause of our happiness or misery. Increased internal control increases accountability and thus creates happiness and hope [22].

Nasairi and Jokar (2018) conducted a study on women working in educational occupation. Multiple regression results simultaneously showed the significant mediating role of hope in the relationship between meaningfulness of life and life satisfaction and mental health indicators. The meaningfulness of life can increase happiness and life satisfaction. In other words, the meaningfulness of life indirectly and in interaction with hope can increase happiness and life satisfaction and reduce depression [23].

Amiri Barmakuie (2018) in a research study on the effectiveness of coping skills training in reducing depression symptoms found that coping skills significantly reduced depression symptoms, social problems, and mental engagement, or illness and death [24].

Yarmohammadian (2017), in his research, studied the effect of coping skills training on the prevention of divorce among young couples. This study was conducted to determine the effect of coping skills training on the prevention of divorce among young couples. The research was a quasi-experimental on three groups (two experimental and one control group) with pre-test and post-test. Findings showed that coping skills training had a significant effect on the prevention of divorce in young couples [25].

Parvin (2016), in his research, investigated the effect of coping skills training sessions on the status of life satisfaction of female nursing staff. In this quasi-experimental study, which was a pre-test and post-test type, the results showed that coping skill training had a positive effect on increasing the life satisfaction of female nurses [26].

Amani *et al.* (2016) studied the effect of life skills training on the happiness of female students. Findings showed that Levin Saun and Got Leib social skills training is effective in increasing the happiness of female students. Research findings in this field are consistent with the results of other researches on the effectiveness of this method in increasing happiness [27].

Research Methodology

Population, sample and sampling method

According to the nature of the subject and the objectives of the study, the study method was experimental. The statistical population of the study consisted of all divorced women referred to Rahyaft counseling and psychological services center of Bam city in the first half of 2016, and 34 of the target population were randomly selected as the target population and according to the entry criteria (the consent of the individual to attend the group, being a woman, being divorced, having a severe mental disorder in a person, being aged between 15 and 55, having a high school diploma or a level of education that can understand the interventions and write related homework and give a written report from it) and social and economic status, age and duration of marital life were divided into two peer

groups. Then, one of the groups was randomly assigned as the experimental group and the other one as the control group.

Exit criteria

1. Unwillingness to attend weekly meetings
2. Not attending weekly meetings in three consecutive sessions

Data Collection tools

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

This questionnaire was created in 1990 by Argyle and Lu. Argyle, after consulting with Beck, reversed his depression scale, and thus 21 articles were prepared and 11 additional articles were added to cover other aspects of happiness. Then, this scale was applied to a number of students. According to the formal validity of the questions and the removal of several articles, the final form of questionnaires with 29 questions was prepared and translated into Persian by AliPour and Nourbala (1999). By implementing the final form, statistical indices such as internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha were tested, which was equal to 93%. The scoring of this questionnaire was four-choices of 0-3. The highest score is 87, indicating a limit of happiness and the lowest score is 0. Its normal score is 40 to 42. [28]. In a study conducted by AliPour and Nourbala in 1999 with a sample of 101 students in Tehran city, the coefficient of internal consistency for men and women was 94% and 9%, respectively. The retest validity coefficient after 3 weeks and the re-test reliability coefficient was obtained 79% at a time interval of three weeks in a 25-member sample. In order to check the validity and reliability of the revised form, 29 happiness propositions were conducted using a larger sample size and extensive statistical sample. In addition to examine the validity and reliability of the revised form of happiness, the correlation between the scores derived from the above list and the personality traits of Eisang and depression scores were also determined.

Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale:

The Dysfunctional Attitude Scale was made by Beck and Wiesman in 1987. This questionnaire was developed based on Beck's cognitive theory of depression and anxiety. This scale measures beliefs and attitudes that includes highly non-flexible criteria for evaluating personal and value performance [29]. This questionnaire consists of 40 items that the subject answers them based on the 7-degree Likert scale and is designed to evaluate the underlying assumptions and beliefs that make up schemas [30]. The validity and reliability of the Dysfunctional Attitudes scale were estimated by a sample of 2023 outpatient who referred for cognitive therapy and satisfactory coefficients were obtained [31]. In a research, using a retest method in a group of 30 people, the reliability of the inadequate attitudes scale in Iran was obtained as 0.72 [32]. To test the validity of this test, its correlation with Padua questionnaire was used which showed a significant relationship.

Procedure

At first, the pretest (dependent variables) was performed on both groups and then the intervention group was exposed to the intervention variable (the coping skills training in the present study) for 10 sessions of 1.5 hours. After the intervention, the post-test was performed on both of the two groups (dependent variables). The content of the sessions was as follows:

Table 1: Content of training sessions

Session	content
1	The purpose of introduction on the concepts of psychological stress, definitions, types and its consequences
2	The purpose of recognition of the relationship between stress and emotional reactions, the role of cognitive assessment in psychological stress
3	The purpose of identifying the psychological pressures associated with being a widow and becoming single
4	The purpose of teaching positive thinking
5	The purpose of familiarizing with the concept of coping and its types
6	The purpose of physical and mental relaxation
7	The purpose of problem-solving training and dealing with problems
8	The purpose of coping training through the creation of pleasant situations, including favorable family relationships, travel, healthy holidays and participation in celebrations.
9	The purpose of training to cope with psychological pressures through understanding social support
10	The purpose of summarizing all the subjects presented at the sessions

Results:

The information obtained from the implementation of Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Beck and Weisman Dysfunctional Attitudes scale in the pre-test and post-test in the two groups were analyzed using SPSS software which is presented as follows:

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the scores of the experimental and control groups in the variables studied before and after the intervention

Variable	Experiment				Control			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dysfunctional Attitudes	197.76	18.57	176.64	17.49	188.14	19.15	194.48	17.11
Perfectionism	74.00	14.07	23.64	11.05	73.17	12.26	72.29	14.88
Social verification	53.00	10.38	48.02	8.66	56.88	9.82	55.86	9.20
Happiness	48.94	8.14	53.76	9.39	45.47	7.74	46.11	7.67

Shapiro Wilkes test was used to check the normal distribution of the scores. Results showed that the significance level for all variables was higher than (0.05). Regarding this result, it can be accepted that the distribution of these variables does not have a significant difference with normal distribution.

Table 3 shows the test of the inter-subject effects of the pre-test group interactions to examine the regression slope hypothesis in the variables under study.

Table 3: The results of the test of the inter-subject effects of the pre-test group interaction to examine the regression slope hypothesis

Variable	Sum of squares	Sum of squares	DF	Mean of squares	F value	Significance level
Dysfunctional Attitudes	Support*pre-test	399.49	2	195.74	6.39	p>0.05
	Error	905.47	31	31.22		
	Total	1302.96	33			
Perfectionism	Intensity*pre-test	324.94	2	162.47	43.41	p>0.05
	Error	108.52	31	3.74		
	Total	433.46	33			
Social verification	Psychic intimacy * pre-test	188.51	2	94.35	24.96	p>0.05
	Error	109.48	31	3.77		
	Total	298.00	33			
Happiness	Intimacy * Pre-test	887.09	2	438.54	35.24	p>0.05
	Error	360.87	31	12.24		
	Total	1237.96	33			

As the results of the interactive effect of pre-test and groups in the studied variables show, the statistical amount obtained from the interactive effect in the variables is significant ($p < 0.05$); the significance of the interactive effect indicates that the slope of the pre-test and post-test regressions have significant differences in the two groups. As a result, there is no uniformity assumption of regression slopes. As a result, a comparison of the differential scores was used to analyze the data.

Table 4: The final result of MANCOVA to compare the post-test scores of the variables studied

Index	Value	F	df1	df2	Significance level
The effect of Pillay	0.68	31.58	2	31	P < 0.05

According to the results obtained from multivariate Pillay effect analysis with the value (0.68) and the amount ($F = 31.58$), it is significant in the level of ($p < 0.05$). It can be concluded that the effect of intervention on the variables studied in the experimental group was effective.

Table 4 shows the continuation of multivariate analysis to examine the impact of intervention specifically on research variables.

Table 5: The final result of MANCOVA to more accurate comparison the post-test scores of the variables studied

Variable	Sum of the squares	Sum of the squares	DF	Mean of the squares	F value	Significance level
Dysfunctional attitude	Group	212.69	1	212.69	7.33	p<0.05
	Error	870.46	30	29.01		
	Total	1083.16	31			
Perfectionism	Group	671.36	1	471.36	65.29	p<0.05
	Error	308.47	30	10.28		
	Total	979.83	31			
Social verification	Group	671.36	1	471.36	65.29	p<0.05
	Error	308.47	30	10.28		
	Total	979.83	31			
Happiness	Group	671.36	1	471.36	65.29	p<0.05
	Error	308.47	30	10.28		
	Total	979.83	31			

As the results of the final analysis show, the difference between the experimental and control groups in the differential scores of the inefficient attitude is significant ($F = 7.33$, $P < 0.05$). Also the result shows a significant difference between the two groups in the perfectionism variable ($F = 65.29$; $P < 0.05$). According to the results, it could be said that the effectiveness of intervention on social verification and happiness was also significant. As the results of the final analysis show, the difference between the experimental and control groups in the differential scores is significant in terms of the social validation variable ($F = 88.97$, $P < 0.05$). This result in the happiness variable ($P = 0.05$, $P < 0.05$) indicates that the difference between the two groups is significant. According to the obtained results, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of intervention on the variables studied was significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first finding of this study was obtained from the confirmation of the first hypothesis. This hypothesis suggested that "coping skills training is effective on Dysfunctional Attitudes in divorced women." According to the results, the significance of this hypothesis showed that coping skills training has been effective in reducing Dysfunctional Attitudes. This result is consistent with the results of researches by Gerybi *et al.* [33], Najafi [34], Thomas and Altareb [35]. The following issues can be considered in explaining this result:

Negative thinking and Dysfunctional Attitudes are among the non-beneficial confrontations that individuals use to shift the source of stress and improve the emotions of a stressful situation, in which case the individual emphasizes the negative aspects of the problem and see the problem much more than what it really is and in an insoluble way, while effective and useful coping skills based on reinterpretation result in having a positive assessment of incidents and situations based on an optimistic attitude to life events. This coping controls emotions and mental disturbances [36].

The second hypothesis was that "coping skills training is effective on the happiness of divorced women" and the results of this study confirmed this hypothesis. The findings of this study were consistent with the findings of Khodadi Sangheh *et al.* [37], Rostami *et al.* [38] Van Kaplan [39] and Lemm and Friedenberg [40]. One of the issues that can be considered in explaining this finding is that negative emotions such as anxiety and anger that are commonly seen in a person's divorce cause his mind to only produce defensive responses against issues creating these negative emotions while the positive emotions cause the person's mind to be open to stimuli and this, in turn, creates opportunities for wider attention to the environment and thus increases the person's creativity and makes happiness, and according to the fact that coping skills training have a significant effect on the reduction of anxiety and conflict [41]. As a result, these trainings are effective in increasing the people's happiness.

Based on the present study, in conclusion of the efficacy of coping skills on Dysfunctional Attitudes and happiness it could be said that providing a cognitive and skillful model can reduce mental health problems in Iran. Since coping skills have a significant impact on Dysfunctional Attitudes and divorced women's happiness, it is suggested that these trainings be presented to other groups. The current research has had a few limitations: such as the lack of use of male clients and few subjects which reduces the generalizability of the research findings. Therefore, it is suggested that this study could be done in a larger sample size and use of both genders in order to generalize the results more likely.

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