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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RELIGIOUS INTEGRATION THERAPY ON DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT AMONG DIVORCED WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of religious integrated approach on divorce adjustment among the divorced women in the city of Birjand. The study is a quasi-experimental one, using a pre-test, post-test, and unequal control group. The research population included all the divorced women referred to psychology clinics in Birjand. The participants of the present study were 24 divorced women referred to Sepehr-e Omid counselling center (over the time span of October 2015 to March 2016). They were selected through convenience and volunteer sampling method and were randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=12) and control group (n=12). Fisher (2007) Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) was used for data collection. To examine the effectiveness of the religious integrated approach, an intervention method was used, through which the experimental group received eight 90-minute training sessions for 4.5 successive months. To analyze the data, a covariance analysis method was employed. The results confirmed the effectiveness of the religious integrated approach in the improvement of the participants' divorce adjustment.

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Introduction

Divorce is one the most complex social phenomena of our times. For many it becomes an inevitable part of life when the atmosphere of family life turns into chaos and intolerance. Divorce causes unpleasant and bitter feelings which are often difficult to comprehend [1].

The experience of divorce affects marital adjustment on various dimensions (e.g. psychological, psychical, social, and emotional), decreases familial performance, and leads to the dissatisfaction of the divorcee with life [2]. Research in Iran and other countries shows that the divorced women experience symptoms like depression, disappointment, irresponsibility, psychological disorder, and self-blame. In extreme cases, these symptoms can cause different psychological diseases such as severe depression, hysteria, hypochondria, and paranoia, which can risk the lives of the divorced women [3]. Separation is a grief and mourning phases that can threaten the psychological well-being and sense of security of the people; it can lead to such consequences as loss of social status, financial insecurity, and lack of support by friends. It is therefore natural to

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experience grief and depression after a divorce. A support network is able to give people a sense of security. A higher depression level is a sign of lack of divorce adjustment [4].

Women are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of divorce than men are. Divorced women suffer from financial problems and pressures caused by the feeling of irresponsibility. They also deal with other problems such as unpleasant attitude of the society and other people. Such a negative attitude towards the divorced women, especially during the year after the separation, causes resentment, anxiety, anger, depression, and unsociability, i.e. dissolution of familial and social ties with others [5]. Today, the number of divorced women who work as single parents is increasing. As a result of social and economic constraints, these women suffer from feelings of helplessness, and despite possible financial supports, they usually have a difficult life; the negative consequences of divorce leads to maladjustment and unhappiness. The negative consequences of divorce include: immune system dysfunction, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, addiction, suicide, changes in lifestyle and self-image, reduced professional performance, changes in social relations and lack of social support [5].

Religious integrated therapy is a combination of recent psychological therapies, especially humanist and cognitive approaches, with religious and mystical teachings of Islam. Religious integrated/integration therapy was introduced in 2001 by Jalal Tehrani in the Handbook of Innovative Therapy. This approach emphasizes human growth and development, and enables a person to look for deeper meanings in life in order to achieve self-understanding. This approach is expected to give a person a comprehension of higher values and truths [6]. Studies have shown that if religious values and beliefs are internalized and accepted by a person, these values can utilized to strengthen the characteristics and identity of a person [7,8]. Studies by Pargament (2014) and Pollner (2009) have indicated that belief in God and performing religious rituals have a positive effect on psychological well-being and mental order of people [9,10].

In light of the above discussion, the main question of the present study is: Is training based on religious integration therapy method effective on divorce adjustment and meta-cognitive beliefs of divorced women in the city of Birjand?

Research Methodology

Given the aims of the study and the types of interventions, this study is quasi-experimental, using pre-test, post-test, and unequal control group. The participants of the present study were 24 divorced women referred to Sepehr-e Omid counselling center (over the time span of October 2015 to March 2016). They were selected through convenience and volunteer sampling method and were randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=12) and control group (n=12).

For data collection, Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scal (FDAS) was used. This scale was made by Fisher in 1976 and has been revised several times [11]. This scale is made of 100 questions, based on Likert's method: from 1 to 5; 1 (always), 2 (often), 3 (sometimes), 4 (rarely), 5 (never). High scores show low divorce adjustments whereas low scores show high divorce adjustment.

The reliability of the above scale was checked by Cronbach's alphas as 0.98 (11). Mohammadi (2012) has reported that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale is 0.84 [12]. The following shows the topics of the training sessions.

Table 1. Topics of the integration therapy sessions [13]

Session	Topic
Session 1	Establishing a relationship and evaluating the references (initial conceptualization, weakness and strengths, stipulating the rules, forming an educational contract, pre-test)
Session 2	Checking the damages among the members (harmful communications, harmful behaviors); improving effective communications; sharing emotions with other members and friends
Session 3	Creating order and communication in life as normal; treating the damages with regard to marital and personal problems; flashbacks and dealing with the trauma of divorce
Session 4	Finding the factors which have led to maladjustments
Session 5	Finding the factors which have damaged meta-cognitive beliefs
Session 6	Case conceptualizations about factors influencing maladjustments and meta-cognitive beliefs
Session 7	Investigating the issue of impunity caused by the current conditions; examining impunity models, their advantages and disadvantages
Session 8	Moving on and terminating training sessions; identifying behavioral changes with regard to adjustment and meta-cognitive beliefs; reforming beliefs, reviewing interventions, feedbacks, post-test

Findings

50% of the participants were in the experiment group (12 people) and the other 50% in the control group (12 people). 21% of the participants were 25 years old; 41% between 25-30, and 38% between 31-35. The collected data was analyzed in SPSS21 by using covariance analysis method.

Table 2. Means and standard deviation of divorce adjustment scores in the pre-test and post-test

Group	Variable	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Experiment	Divorce adjustment	342/34	43/003	265/341	36/37
Control	Divorce adjustment	349/21	43/09	365/35	43/11

As seen in the above table, the mean score of control group in the post-test is not very different from the mean score in the pre-test. In the experiment group, the scores of the variable of divorce adjustment in the post-test have decreased in comparison to the scores in the pre-test.

Table 3. Effect of inter-group communication on divorce adjustment in the experiment and control groups in the post-test

Variable	Source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Sig.	Sum of effect
Divorce adjustment	Inter-group	438/238	1	438/238	33/043	0/001	0/46
	Intra-group	389/348	19	16/954			
	Total	14768/483	23				

As shown in the above table, the obtained F for all the variables including divorce adjustment and meta-cognitive beliefs is 0.01. Accordingly, hypothesis 0 is rejected, and the hypothesis of the research is confirmed. It can be concluded that integration therapy method improves divorce adjustment of the divorced women in Birjand.

Table 4. Adjusted means of the variable of divorce adjustment

Standard deviation	Mean	Group	Variable
1/546	320/786	Experiment	Divorce adjustment
1/546	387/548	Control	

The above means show that the score of the experiment group has increased in comparison to the score of the control group.

Discussion And Conclusion

The results of the covariance analysis showed that the obtained F for divorce adjustment is 0.01. Therefore, it can be concluded that integration therapy method improves divorce adjustment among the divorced women of Birjand. These findings are in line with the studies done by Ebrahimi, Zanjani, & Bakhtiari (2011), Malekian et al. (2011), Farzinrad (2011), Russel (2013), Alboa et al. (2012), and Cynthia et al. (2007) [14-19].

To explain the results, it can be mentioned that the group therapy trained by religious integration method (using motivational techniques to control intrusive thoughts) has decreased the adverse effects of negative thoughts. Religious integration therapy method has improved personal performance, promoted positive feelings and strengthened the sense of self-control. In fact, this method has helped the divorced women to change negative self-concepts, and has allowed them to control their emotions. Therefore, this method has helped the divorced women to improve their psychological and psychical well-being, and gain positive feelings and self-consciousness about themselves. The intervention therapy sessions and similar feedbacks have enabled the divorced women to have better concepts about themselves and the society. The members of the group accepted their roles and actively participated in the activities. By doing the assigned tasks they could overcome negative self-evaluations, negative feelings of depression and anxiety, uncontrollable conditions, and negative beliefs. Instead, they could gain self-growth and a clear understanding of goals. This therapy created motivation and decreased anxiety and mental obsessions [17].

In general, it can be concluded that religious integration therapy method (based on presenting effective techniques) enables the divorced women to discover inherent talents for change and therefore help them gain intrinsic motivation, account themselves for the problems, control negative thoughts and beliefs, decrease obsessions, improve self-confidence, and achieve cognitive control. Accordingly, it can be stated that religious integration therapy method decreases the meta-cognitive beliefs of divorced women, and this in turn, is effective on decreasing their psychological disorders.

In the end, given the fact that the present study was limited to a specific case study with a controlled number of participants, the results are difficult to generalize. It is recommended that counselors and therapists use this method more often, and prepare training courses based on religious integrated therapy method for the divorced women as a way of self-therapy.

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