

## Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Sexual Assertiveness of Women with Emotional Divorce

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of acceptance and commitment therapy on sexual assertiveness in women with emotional divorce. Among the women who had the criteria for entering the research, 30 persons were selected by available sampling method and assigned randomly into experimental and control groups. Both the experimental and control groups completed the Hurlbert's sexual assertiveness scale. The experimental group received 8 sessions of 90 minutes, once a week. Sessions for the training group therapy were based on acceptance and commitment. Data were analyzed by using analysis of variance with repeated measure. The results showed that the level of sexual assertiveness of the experimental group was significantly increased compared to the control group and this increase had remained steady in the follow-up. Therefore, it can be concluded that training acceptance and commitment therapy can increase the sexual assertiveness in women with emotional divorce.

**Keywords:** Acceptance and commitment therapy, emotional divorce, sexual assertiveness.

### Introduction

Emotional divorce is the most important threat to the foundation of the family and recognizing the effective and influential factors is one of the priorities. Many variables can play a role in creating an emotional divorce, among which we can mention sexual intercourse (Momeni, et al., 2016). Sexual dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of emotional divorce between couples (Eftekhari, 2019). One of the important factors of sexual satisfaction in women's sexual relations with their husbands is sexual assertiveness. Sexual assertiveness has a significant effect on sexual satisfaction (Eklund, & Hjelm, 2018) and can improve women's sexual status (Leclerc, et al., 2015) and increase their sexual health (Widman & Gulin, 2018).

One of the appropriate approaches to treat marital problems is acceptance and commitment therapy, which is effective in improving interpersonal relationships between couples with marital problems (Wiebe et al, 2017). The results of research have shown that commitment-based treatment and acceptance on marital satisfaction and sexual self-esteem of women (Asadpour & Weissy, 2018), improving sexual function, sexual courage and reducing female sexual shyness (Tabatabai, et al., 2017). Given the high prevalence of emotional divorce and the important role that emotional divorce plays in endangering the health of family and society, the research hypothesis was that acceptance and commitment therapy training had an effect on the sexual assertiveness of women in emotional divorce.

## Method

The method of this research was quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test with a control group and a follow-up period. The statistical population of the study included all women who in the first half of 2018 for marital problems referred to psychological counseling centers in District 1 of Tehran and according to the diagnosis of relevant psychologists were in a state of emotional divorce. Among these people, 30 people were selected by available methods and then were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups (15 people in each group). The tool in this study was the Hurlbert's Sexual Assertiveness Scale, with the test-retest correlation of 0.86 and Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 (Hurlbert & Apt, 1992). The total alpha coefficient of the test was 0.90 in the present study. The treatment program based on acceptance and commitment for 8 weeks (1 session per week) and each session for 90 minutes as a group based on the treatment based on acceptance and commitment of couples (Lou & McKay, 2018) for the experimental group was performed by the researcher but the control group did not receive any intervention. At the end of the course, participant in both groups completed the test again. Also, after two months of training sessions to assess the sustainability of the effects of the intervention, participants were re-evaluated. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 23. Analysis of variance with repeated measures was used to analyze the data.

## Results

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of pre-test, post-test and follow-up scores in both control and experimental groups. It can be seen that there is no significant difference between the pre-test scores of sexual assertiveness in the control group and the experimental group, but in the post-test stage, the scores of sexual assertiveness in the experimental group are significantly higher than the control group, also, it is significantly higher after 2 months in follow-up stage.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of pre-test, post-test and follow-up scores in both control and experimental groups

Stage	control group		Experimental group	
	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation
Pre-test	38.93	9.90	39.90	8.65
Post-test	38.13	8.50	51.93	9.84
Follow up	37.60	7.54	56.13	7.14

Before performing the repeated measures analysis of variance test, the assumptions of normality of the distribution of variables were checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which claimed that the distribution of variables was normal. Also, the results of the M box test showed that the condition of homogeneity of covariance matrices of variance. According to Table 2, the level of significance about the stage was less than 0.05, so there were significant differences between the mean scores of sexual assertiveness in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages and also

according to the significance of the effect. The interaction between stage and group and also the significance of group effect, it was concluded that the rate of sexual assertiveness changed from the pre-test, to post-test and follow-up stages, showing increase in the rate of sexual assertiveness of the experimental group.

Table 2. Results of repeated measures analysis of variance for comparison of pre-test, post-test and follow-up of sexual assertiveness

Source	Type III Sum of			F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Squares	df	Mean Square			
Step	970.69	2	485.34	55.37	0.0001	0.66
Group * Step	1316.47	2	658.23	75.10	0.0001	0.73
Group	2689.6	1	2689.6	12.97	0.001	0.32

## conclusion

The results showed that acceptance and commitment therapy was effective in increasing the sexual assertiveness of women with emotional divorce. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Asadpour and Weissy(2018), Tabatabai et al.(1396), Bakchalaki and Mansouri(2017). During acceptance and commitment therapy training sessions, providing a way to accept emotions without trying to control them will help women better accept their sexual feelings and express their feelings and desires. During acceptance and commitment therapy training sessions, offering a method of accepting emotions without trying to control them will help women better accept their sexual feelings and express their feelings and desires. One of the limitations of the present study is that this study was performed on women. Due to the growing trend of emotional divorce in the country, it is suggested by relevant psychologists to hold training workshops on treatment based on acceptance and commitment for married women in order to increase sexual assertiveness, reduce emotional divorce and improve marital relationship.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the professors, participants and counseling centers who helped us in this research.

## Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not for profit sectors.

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