

The Effect of Schema Therapy on Sexual Function and Relationship Attributions among Women Damaged by Marital Infidelity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of schema therapy on sexual function and relationship attributions among women damaged by marital infidelity. This research method was quasi-experimental with pretest-posttest and control group. The study sample consisted of 30 women affected by their spouse's extramarital affairs (15 women in the control group and 15 women in the experimental group) that were randomly selected and randomly assigned to the two groups. The data were collected by the Sexual Function Index (Rosen, *et al.*) and Relationship Attribution Measurement (Fincham & Bradbury). Data were analyzed using ANCOVA and MANCOVA. The findings showed that schema therapy could significantly improve sexual function and relationship attributions.

Keywords: Extramarital, Relationship Attributions, Sexual Function, Schema Therapy.

Introduction

Family life can be dangerous. One of these dangers is extramarital affairs. Any sexual intercourse or emotional relationship outside the framework of marital relations, which is considered a threat to marital life, is legally defined as extramarital affairs. Numerous personality, social and family factors are the causes of extramarital affairs. (Mtenga, et al., 2018).

Research on the factors associated with marital infidelity shows that sexuality is one of the most important issues for couples in terms of importance. The research of Whitson and El-Sheikh (2014) has shown that having a desirable sexual relationship in a way that can satisfy both parties have a very important and fundamental role in the stability of the family unit. Ignorance of sexual instinct in humans seems to have irreparable consequences, so that its risk causes disorders in emotions, personality and social functioning of individuals (Paknit, & Roshanchseli, 2018).

One of the cognitive components that try to explain marital differences Relationship Attributions. Research shows that it is possible to predict different levels of marital stability and quality by different styles of marital attributions. From a psychological point of view, dealing with the extramarital phenomenon requires a comprehensive approach, so that it can be used to describe and explain this phenomenon and also to treat the consequences. (Kimmes & Durtschi, 2016).

Schema therapy is one of the approaches that claim effectiveness and treatment in the field of emotional issues and problems. Studies have shown that schema therapy is effective in improving communication beliefs, marital adjustment, intimacy and marital Attributions (Nooroney, et al., 2019). Due to the increase in extramarital relationships in this study, it was intended to investigate the effect of schema therapy on these two important variables that greatly affect the psychological status of women. Therefore, the research hypothesis is as follows: Schema therapy is effective in improving relationship attributions and sexual function of women affected by extramarital affairs.

Method

The method of the present study is quasi-experimental. The study population included women affected by spousal extramarital affairs the city of Ahwaz. The sample consisted of 30 women who were randomly assigned to the experimental group (15 people) and the control group (15 people). In this research, the following tools have been used.

Women's Sexual Performance Index Questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed by Rosen et al. (2000). Preliminary results of the studies reported the reliability and validity of the questionnaire as desirable (Rosen et al., 2000). In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained through Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale of 0.86.

Relationship Attribution Measurement: This scale was developed by Fincham and Bradbury (1992). This scale has two dimensions of causal attribution and responsibility attribution. In the present study, the reliability of the scale was obtained through Cronbach's alpha in the causal dimension and responsibility 0.83 and 0.85, respectively.

Results

Table 1 presents the mean scores of all participants regarding of relationship attribution and sexual function.

Table 1. Descriptive indicator of research variables

| Groups | | Schema therapy | | Control | |
|-----------------|----------|----------------|------|---------|------|
| Variables | stage | M | SD | M | SD |
| Sexual Function | pretest | 45.59 | 5.67 | 44.32 | 5.11 |
| | posttest | 57.48 | 6.86 | 45.18 | 5.24 |
| Causal | pretest | 14.95 | 4.62 | 15.03 | 4.67 |
| | posttest | 9.70 | 4.54 | 14.83 | 5.52 |
| Responsibility | pretest | 13.29 | 5.70 | 14.02 | 4.44 |
| | posttest | 6.45 | 4.46 | 13.93 | 4.91 |

The results are shown in Table 2, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of relationship attribution and sexual function.

Table 2 Results of univariate analysis of covariance scores of the two groups

| Variables | SS | DF | MS | F | P | Eta |
|-----------------|--------|----|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Causal | 63.79 | 1 | 63.79 | 9.45 | 0.001 | 0.312 |
| Responsibility | 125.91 | 1 | 125.91 | 19.33 | 0.001 | 0.624 |
| Sexual Function | 273.12 | 1 | 273.12 | 22.91 | 0.001 | 0.846 |

Discussion and Conclusion

Findings showed that schema therapy has significantly improved relationship attribution and sexual function. This finding is consistent with the results of Kimmes and Durtschi (2016) and Nooroney, et al. (2019). In explaining these results, it can be said that schema therapy makes a person find the cause of her relationship problems and work with more motivation to get rid of her problems. Schema therapy, by changing the anxious cognitive structures and negative emotions, reduces sexual response anxiety and frees the person from negative emotions and thus improves sexual function. The schema therapy approach is based on the belief that the unique circumstances one experiences as a child play an important role in creating a set of beliefs about oneself and others that persist throughout life and relate to one's relationship with oneself and others. Therefore, each couple has schemas about themselves and intimate relationships that lead to marital relationships. In addition to the schemas that each couple relates to themselves, they also create schemas in their current relationship that are specific to this relationship. Therefore, schema therapy seeks to identify these schemas and try to correct or change them and thus improve the couple's relationship (Epstein & Baucom, 2002).

One of the limitations of the present study was the inevitable use of available sampling method. It is suggested that the findings of this study be used in family and individual counseling to identify individuals exposed to extramarital affairs.

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