



Research paper

## The Effectiveness of Emotion Focused Therapy on Self Handicapping, Interpersonal Communication Skills and Life Orientation in Divorced Women

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### Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of emotion focused therapy on self-handicapping, interpersonal communication skills and life orientation in divorced women referred to counseling centers in Isfahan in the fall of 2020. The research was semi-experimental with a pre-test, post-test design with a control group and a one-month follow-up. Among the referents, 28 women were selected and randomly replaced in two groups. The participants of the experimental group received Goldman and Greenberg's emotion-focused therapy individually for 9 sessions of 90 minutes. The instruments of this study were the Jones & Rudwalt Self-handicapping, Jerabek Interpersonal communication skills and Scheier & Carver Life orientation. For data analysis variance with repeated measures was used. Based on findings for reduction of self-handicapping and improvement in interpersonal communication skills and life orientation in divorced women emotion focused therapy can be used.

**Keywords:** Emotion focused therapy, interpersonal communication skills, life orientation, self-handicapping.

### Introduction

Societies in recent decades have witnessed outstanding changes in the prevalence of diverse family forms. Divorced women are more vulnerable because the most important parts of their effective communication undergo changes, and effective interpersonal communication can lead to the emergence of optimism in life (Iman, et al., 2020). Mottaghi, et al. (2018) in research titled the effectiveness of emotion-focused therapy on depression, hope for the future and interpersonal trust in divorced women showed that emotion-focused therapy, with the necessary training, can improve communication skills and increase positivity. It helps to improve the mental state of people and increase the level of satisfaction with a person's life. The current study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of emotional focused therapy based on the following hypotheses.

- emotionally focused therapy on the self-handicapping of divorced women is effective.
- emotionally focused therapy on the interpersonal communication skills of divorced women is effective.
- emotionally focused therapy on the life orientation of divorced women is effective.

### Method

The current research was a semi-experimental type using a pre-test-post-test design with a control group and a one-month follow-up. The statistical population was all divorced women who referred to private counseling centers in Isfahan. In order to carry out the research after the call, 44 people were selected non-randomly from among the people who were eligible to enter the research, and after the initial clinical interview by the researcher, 36 people were randomly divided into two groups of 18 people. In the end, two groups of 14 people (due to the drop of the sample) had received focused emotional therapy at the Behesht Clinic in Isfahan city by a master's degree in clinical psychology. First, both groups completed the research questionnaires, and then the experimental group was treated in 9 sessions of 90 minutes which was taken from the emotion-focused therapy of Goldman and Greenberg, (2015). After 30 days from the end of the sessions, both groups were tested again as a follow-up period. In order to analyze the data, we used the analysis of variance with repeated measurements. Tools were:

**The self-Handicapping Scale (SHS)** of Jones & Rudwalt (1982). This scale contains 25 items and includes three subscales: negative mood, effort and apology and has a reliability of 0.92 (Kathleen, et al., 1999) and between 0.60 and 0.72 (Heidari, et al., 2009). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.72 in the present study

**The Interpersonal Communication Skill Questionnaire (ICSQ)** by Jarabak (2019). This questionnaire contains 34 items and includes five subscales: listen, regulation of emotions, understanding the message, insight, decisiveness with a reliability of 0.8 (Hossein Chari & Fadakar, 2004). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.80 in the present study.

**The Life Orientation Questionnaire (LOQ)** by Scheier and Carver (2001). This questionnaire contains 6 items. It was obtained with a reliability of 0.71 and the concurrent validity between the optimism scale with depression and self-mastery was 0.69 and 0.75, respectively (Scheier and Carver, 2001). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71 in the present study.

**Emotion-Focused Therapy:** After the pre-test, the intervention based on the model (Goldman and Greenberg, 2015) was conducted once a week in the form of 90-minute sessions by a master's student in clinical psychology for the experimental group. The control group did not receive any intervention until the end of the follow-up period.

## Results

The results in the two groups are presented in Table 1. It shows that the average scores of self-handicapping in the experimental group compared to the control group decreased more in the post-test and follow-up compared to the pre-test, and the average communication skills and life orientation in the experimental group increased more in the post-test and follow-up compared to the pre-test.

**Table 1: Descriptive indices of the scores of the variables dependent on the separation of the two groups and the three stages of the research**

variable		Experimental group			Control group		
		pretest	post test	follow up	pretest	post test	follow up
self-handicapping	Mean	89.14	73.50	72.14	92.21	84.42	87.14
	SD	13.50	10.10	12.71	13.50	11.49	8.34

<b>communication skills</b>	Mean	84.35	103.50	92.42	77.92	83.00	77.14
	SD	9.51	8.25	8.10	7.89	6.91	10.38
<b>life orientation</b>	Mean	11.71	15.64	14.07	13.21	10.78	12.50
	SD	3.14	4.23	4.71	3.44	4.15	2.92

The results in Table 2 show that there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the variable of self-handicapping and communication skills ( $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, this treatment had an effect on the self-handicapping and communication skills of divorced women in the post-examination and follow-up stages and reduced it. In addition, the treatment and follow-up for life orientation shows that the treatment led to an improvement in life orientation, but the effects of the treatment were not stable.

**Table 2: The detailed results of the analysis of variance test with repeated measurement of the dependent variable in the research stages**

dependent variable	stages	B	S d. E.	T	P	effect size	Statistical power
<b>self-handicapping</b>	After the test	-11.08	4.17	-2.66	0.013	0.22	0.73
	follow up	-14.88	4.15	-3.59	0.001	0.34	0.93
<b>communication skills</b>	After the test	19.56	3.10	6.32	0.579	0.62	1.00
	follow up	15.35	3.84	3.99	0.001	0.39	0.97
<b>life orientation</b>	After the test	5.50	1.56	3.52	0.002	0.33	0.92
	follow up	1.88	1.53	1.23	0.230	0.06	0.22

## Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed the therapy reduces self-handicapping, interpersonal communication skills and improves life orientation of divorced women. It changes the functioning of cognitive systems and then changes the attitude and way of solving conflicts in a person. Avoiding unpleasant emotions leads to maladaptive responses related to mental emotions, because instead of experiencing these emotions, the person finds a way to escape, achieves the creation of new communication meaning and changes communication patterns. It can also be led to inner optimism. Limitation of study included: the shortness of follow-up period, lack of generalizing the results to men and lack of comparison of this approach with other approaches. It is recommended to repeat this intervention by 6-month follow-up period, and conducting future research on divorced men as well and compare the effectiveness of this approach with some other approaches.

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### **Conflict of Interests**

There is no conflict of interests for researchers.

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