



The effect of short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) on reducing anxiety, increasing self-empathy, coping and social adaptation in women with the experience of sexual assault

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this research was to determine the effectiveness of short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) on reducing anxiety, increasing self-empathy, coping and social adaptation in women who experienced sexual assault. **Method:** This research was practical in terms of purpose and semi-experimental in terms of method with a pre-test, post-test and follow-up design with a control group. So that two groups of subjects were randomly selected and replaced in two experimental and control groups. In the present study, a statistical population was formed including all women who experienced sexual assault in the year 2020-21 in the counseling and psychology center supporting the art of life in Tehran province. The statistical sample consisted of 30 women who experienced sexual assault, who were selected by available sampling method and then randomly assigned to one of the two experimental (15 people) and control (15 people) groups. Beck's (1988), Mark Davis' (1983) empathy, Lazarus et al.'s (1988) coping, and Clark et al.'s (1953) social adjustment questionnaires were used to collect data. In the following, short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) according to the protocol of Abbas (2016) was applied to the experimental group during 15 individual counseling sessions of 90 minutes twice a week, and finally, a post-test was taken from both groups. Analysis of variance with repeated measurements was used in data analysis. **Results:** The results showed that short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy reduces anxiety ($F=8.95, P<0.001$), increases self-empathy ($F=22.94, P<0.001$) and improving social adaptation ($F=29.17, P<0.001$) is effective in women with sexual assault experience. **Conclusion:** It can be concluded that short-term intensive psychotherapy is effective in reducing anxiety, increasing self-empathy, coping and social adaptation in women who have experienced sexual assault.

Keywords: anxiety, empathy, social adaptation, sexual assault, dynamic psychotherapy.

Introduction

There are so many side effects after sexual assault that these effects can be divided into two categories, physical and psychological, some of which include: post-traumatic stress disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, self-harm, Stockholm syndrome, depression, sexually transmitted infections (AIDS, hepatitis, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, genital herpes, papillomavirus), pregnancy, borderline personality disorders, sleep disorders, eating disorders, memory disorders, and suicide (Sadok, et al., 2017). From the point of view of etiology, there are three theories about sexual assault, which include 1- Single-factor theory, 2- Multi-factor theory, 3- Wisdom of theories (Sarkar, 2019). It analyzes the behavior of criminals and examines them in terms of behavioral, emotional, and background factors, and according to the results of these analyzes, it provides preventive programs to prevent sexual assaults (Ward & Beach, 2016).

The existence of various emotional pressures will increase the risk of psychological disintegration and harm mental health, as a result, a person is not able to behave harmoniously and harmoniously with society and maintain his mental health (Nahidi et al., 2017).

One of the variables that plays a role among women who experience sexual assault is anxiety. Anxiety is a common phenomenon of our time, and at the same time, with a background throughout history, it has always attracted the attention of mankind. Basically, since a long time, mankind has been associated with the two phenomena of fear and anxiety, and he has always tried to find ways to overcome these problems and relieve them, and in this way he has achieved great results, but he has not yet achieved complete success.

One of the variables that plays a role among women with the experience of sexual assault is empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand what another person feels and suffers from within another person's adjustment or orientation, that is, the capacity to accept individuality in another's shoes. Therefore, empathy allows a person to be effectively differentiated in society (Farago et al., 2017).

Another variable that plays a role among women with the experience of sexual assault is coping, which refers to specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people use to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events (Nourbakhsh et al., 2020). Coping strategies have been defined as a set of behavioral and cognitive responses that aim to minimize the pressure of stressful situations, many studies have shown the relationship between coping styles and mental health. Effective coping strategies reduce the individual's reaction to high levels of stress and moderate its harmful effects. Coping styles can be problem-oriented, emotion-oriented or avoidant. Problem-oriented coping can be considered as an attempt to manage and change the stressful problem, but emotion-oriented coping is an attempt to reduce emotional stress and focuses on controlling stress symptoms. In avoidant coping, the person constantly evades and avoids facing the event, while the problem is present in the mind throughout the duration of the escape and disturbs the concentration (Hajian et al., 2021).

Among the variables that play a role among women who have experienced sexual assault is social adaptation. Social adaptation means a person's adaptation to the social environment. This adaptation can be created by adapting oneself to the environment or changing the surrounding environment to meet the needs and achieve the desired (Firozifar et al., 2015). Social adaptation is the most important

sign of mental health, one of the topics that has attracted a lot of attention in recent decades.

One of the treatments for women who have experienced sexual assault is short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP), which helps the patient to solve his problems based on how he deals with emotions and conflicts.

The short-term and intensive psychodynamic perspective originates from the Freudian model of psychoanalysis, which was designed and developed by Iranian scientists named Dovanlo at McGill University, in which the long-term, ineffective, unorganized and unclear method of psychoanalysis has been transformed into a short-term, effective, organized and clear method (Qurbani, 2019). In this treatment, patients are helped to regulate their anxiety and change their defenses so that they can face the emotions they have been avoiding (Wolf et al., 2019).

The superiority of intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy intervention over other psychotherapy interventions is the experience of deep emotions during the treatment session, high levels of therapist activity, encouraging clients to cooperate and active attention to time limits, as well as having a therapeutic focus and special selection criteria, and the continuous effort of the therapist for deep emotional experience as a healing element. Intensive dynamic psychotherapy links experience and reflection, not mere reasoning. In fact, by neutralizing the patient's defenses and drawing the patient's attention to his body, the therapist reveals an emotional manifestation to him, and it is this reflection after experiencing the feeling that leads to change and healing (Johnson et al., 2019).

The current research sought to answer the following questions:

- 1- Was short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) effective in reducing anxiety, increasing self-compassion, coping and social adjustment in women who experienced sexual assault in the post-examination phase?
- 2- Was short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) effective in reducing anxiety, increasing self-compassion, coping and social adjustment in women with sexual assault experience in the follow-up phase?

Method

This research was practical in terms of purpose and semi-experimental in terms of method with a pre-test, post-test and follow-up design with a control group. So that two groups of subjects were randomly selected and replaced in two experimental and control groups. In the present study, a statistical population was formed including all women who experienced sexual assault in the year 2020-21 in the counseling and psychology center supporting the art of life in Tehran province. The statistical sample consisted of 30 women who experienced sexual assault, who were selected by available sampling method and then randomly assigned to one of the two experimental (15 people) and control (15 people) groups. Beck's (1988), Mark Davis' (1983) empathy, Lazarus et al.'s (1988) coping, and Clark et al.'s (1953) social adjustment questionnaires were used to collect data. In the following, short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) according to the protocol of Abbas (2016) was applied to the experimental group during 15 individual counseling sessions of 90 minutes twice a week, and finally, a post-test was taken from both groups. Analysis of variance with repeated measurements was used in data analysis

Results

The results showed that short-term intensive dynamic psychotherapy reduces anxiety ($F=8.95$, $P<0.001$), increases self-empathy ($F=22.94$, $P<0.001$) and improving social adaptation ($F=29.17$, $P<0.001$) in women with sexual assault experience.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that short-term intensive psychotherapy is effective in reducing anxiety, increasing self-empathy, coping and social adaptation in women who have experienced sexual assault.

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