



The effectiveness of positive psychology on self-compassion and gratitude among couples with marital conflicts

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this research was the effectiveness of positive psychology on self-compassion and gratitude among couples with marital conflicts. **Method:** This research was practical in terms of purpose, and in terms of data collection, it was semi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group. The statistical population of the research included couples with marital problems in Tehran who had referred to Tehran counseling centers (Tara Clinic Branches 1 and 2 and Behjo Clinic) in 2022 (184 couples), among them 30 couples with the condition of having the conditions of the research. and willingness to participate in the research were selected and randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control group and 15 couples in each group. Rashid and Seligman's protocol including 10 sessions of 90 minutes (2013) was used for positive psychology therapeutic interventions. The research tools included the Neff Self-Deprecation Questionnaire (2003) and the McCliffe Appreciation Questionnaire (2002). The data was analyzed using analysis of covariance using SPSS-V26 software. **Results:** The findings showed that in the post-test stage, there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group ($P < 0.001$) and the intervention method can be effective on the self-compassion ($F = 32.14, P < 0.001$) and gratitude ($F = 7.64, P < 0.001$) of the couples involved. **Conclusion:** According to the results of the research, it can be stated that positive psychology as an effective treatment method can be used to improve, self-compassion and gratitude and consequently reduce the marital problems of couples, and it is recommended to psychologists and couple therapy specialists to use this treatment method for Use to improve relationships between couples.

Keywords: *Self-Compassion, Gratitude, Positive Psychology.*

Introduction

Marital relationship is one of the most important social relationships for most adults. More than 80% of people over the age of 25 have experienced married life for at least part of their adult life (Wang & Parker, 2014). Conflict is inevitable in intimate relationships, and family relationships have the most conditions for interpersonal conflicts (Hatami & Fadaei, 2015). The increase in marital conflicts and divorce and its negative impact on the mental health of couples, children and society have prompted researchers to seek solutions to strengthen the family institution (Mohammadi & Soleimani, 2017). Marriage is one of the deepest and most complex factors of communication among humans (Hatami & Fadaei, 2015), and the family is an environment where the intellectual, emotional and physical needs of people are met. Failure to meet these needs leads to conflict in couples; Therefore, awareness of biological and psychological needs and how to satisfy them is important (Mohammadi et al., 2020).

There are several conceptualizations of self-compassion (Riz, 2011). According to Neff and Germer (2009), self-compassion, the ability to accept oneself in times of suffering and hardship is one of the internal resources that can affect the coping process. The existing knowledge in the field of self-compassion is due to the researches of Neff and his colleagues. Self-compassion has been defined as a three-component construct including self-kindness versus self-judgment, human commonality versus isolation, and mindfulness versus extreme identification (Neff & Germer, 2013).

Qadrani is another variable that strengthens relationships between people, including relationships between couples. Most definitions of gratitude focus on the perception that a person has received something positive from a benefactor who has positive intentions. Such a definition presents gratitude as a structure that has considerations in relationships between couples. In fact, gratitude is thought to be a moral motivator that helps people form close social bonds (Algue, Heidt, & Gable, 2008). Research has shown that gratitude has many positive effects on people's mental health and stabilizes and strengthens a person's relationships with others. Feeling and expressing gratitude in couples increases the stability of the relationship and reduces conflict in marital conflicts.

Past research investigated the effectiveness of schema therapy in some psychological factors such as resilience, infidelity, intimacy among couples with marital conflicts, and also investigated the effectiveness of positive psychology on marital adjustment, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. However, a study comparing the effectiveness of positive psychology on self-compassion and gratitude among engaged couples has not been conducted so far. According to the above-mentioned contents, the purpose of this research is to compare the effectiveness of positive psychology on self-esteem and gratitude among engaged couples. The current research sought to answer the following questions:

1. Was the effectiveness of positive psychology effective on self-compassion and gratitude among engaged couples in the post-test phase?
2. Was the effectiveness of positive psychology on self-compassion and gratitude among engaged couples stable at the follow-up stage?

Method

This research was practical in terms of purpose, and in terms of data collection, it was semi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group. The statistical population of the research included couples with marital problems in Tehran who had referred to Tehran counseling centers (Tara Clinic Branches 1 and 2 and Behjo Clinic) in 2022 (184 couples), among them 30 couples with the condition of having the conditions of the research. and willingness to participate in the research were selected and randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control group and 15 couples in each group. Rashid and Seligman's protocol including 10 sessions of 90 minutes (2013) was used for positive psychology therapeutic interventions. The research tools included the Neff Self-Deprecation Questionnaire (2003) and the McCliffe Appreciation Questionnaire (2002). The data was analyzed using analysis of covariance using SPSS-V26 software.

Results

The results of Shapiro-Wilk and Klomogrov-Smirnov index showed that the distribution of data related to both variables in the groups is normal. Also, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was also maintained among the data of this research. The condition of homogeneity of variances was also checked using Levene's statistic and the assumption of sphericity (equal variance of the difference of all pairs of repeated measurements) by performing the Mauchly test. If the Mauchly statistic becomes significant, the adjusted degrees of freedom of Greenhouse-Geisser, and if the Mauchly statistic is not significant, the adjusted degrees of freedom of Spricity are used as the basis of the F report.

He reported the results of Levene's statistic, which indicates the non-significance of this statistic ($P > 0.05$), which is a sign of confirming the condition of homogeneity of variances. The value of F for gratitude and self-pity was 32.14 and 7.64, respectively. The significance level for both cases is 0.001, which is significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, at the 99% confidence level, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the mean of gratitude and self-compassion at different times. The effect size of the test was obtained for both variables in the provided treatment, respectively, 0.53 and 0.42, which is a favorable value.

Bonferroni test is the significant difference between positive treatment group and control group. In this way, the mean difference in the positive treatment with the control group for the variables of gratitude and self-compassion had a positive coefficient (that is, the treatment by increasing the mean score improved the condition of people in these two variables).

Conclusion

According to the results of the research, it is suggested that such psychological interventions (especially positive psychology) be used as effective methods to improve couples' relationships. It is suggested to investigate the role of various variables, whether the variables used in this research or other influencing variables in the life of couples. Therefore, it may be possible to reduce the prevalence of emotional separations and divorces, which cause problems not only to parents, but also to their children and ultimately to society. This intervention can be done by therapists and experts in the field of counseling and mental health in educational centers, organizations, health care institutions and other relevant environments.

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