



The effectiveness of emotion-focused couple therapy on positive emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women

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Abstract

Aim: this study aimed to determine the effectiveness of emotion-focused couple therapy on positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women. **Methods:** The research method was semi-experimental with pre-test-posttest design with control group, and the statistical population of the study was all elderly women referred to counseling centers in Babol in 2021. The sample size consisted of 30 elderly women who were selected by convenience sampling methods according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The experimental group received couple therapy intervention in 12 sessions of 90 minutes weekly, questionnaires used in this study included positive meta-emotion questionnaire of Mitmansgruber et al.(2009), Thompson and Walker marital intimacy (1993), and personality abilities of Peterson and Seligman (2004). Data were analyzed by repeatedly measuring variance in SPSS software version 22. **Results:** The results showed that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities ($p < 0.01$). In other words, emotion-focused couple therapy intervention improved positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women. **Conclusion:** According to the findings of the present study, emotional-focused couple therapy intervention can be suggested as an efficient method to increase positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women. **Keywords:** *Emotion-focused couple therapy, positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy, personality abilities, elderly women.*

Introduction

Globally, a demographic revolution is about to happen. With the increase in life expectancy, the growth rate of the elderly population is higher than other age groups. The world's aging population will reach about two billion people by 2025 (Tan et al., 2020). Aging is an inevitable biological process that involves all living organisms and in some cases it is always accompanied by unpleasant experiences (Pinho and Pereira, 2019).

Positive excitement is one of the aspects of human behavior that plays an essential role in people's lives. Farahijan means organizing a set of thoughts and feelings about emotions, which are used to describe the emotions of a person by himself and his arousal towards them (Koopman, 2015). People with positive emotions are less inclined to make inappropriate and hasty decisions and suppress their thoughts and emotions (Misili & Castelfranchi, 2019). Negative emotion is a person's inability to accept his emotions, but positive emotion is a person's ability to accept his emotions (Siosi et al., 2015). If the couple's excitement in the marital relationship is not given mutual attention, it may lead to a decrease in the quality of the marital relationship in them (Javadi Vala et al., 2019).

The quality of the marital relationship includes individual dimensions such as satisfaction and happiness and interpersonal dimensions such as intimacy, agreement, sexual relations, harmony, conflicts and disagreements (Masoumi et al., 2017). If the marital relationship is efficient and sufficient, conditions are provided in which spouses experience intimacy, support, mutual growth and personal growth (Javadi Vala et al., 2019). Marital intimacy is one of the important components of the quality of married life, which is associated with closeness in the relationship, respect, affection and sexual desires. Intimacy is one of the natural needs of people, which can be properly answered in a safe and close marital relationship. Researches have also shown that there is a positive and significant relationship between marital intimacy with increased marital compatibility, marital satisfaction and psychological well-being (Kardan et al., 2018). On the other hand, intimate communication is not limited to a specific period of married life. Instead, couples in old age also report more psychological well-being and personality capabilities if they enjoy intimacy (Abadi et al., 2018).

One of the factors that seems to be affected in elderly people is the strength of their personality (Wallace, 2020). According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), personality abilities show their thoughts and feelings in individual behaviors.

One of the therapeutic solutions effective on marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women is emotion-oriented couple therapy (Kyanipour & Aminiha, 2020). The goal of the emotion-oriented couple therapy approach is to reprocess the underlying emotional reactions in the interaction of couples. In this approach, by strengthening the secure attachment chains in couples' relationships, therapists create a new interactive cycle in relationships between couples, which ultimately leads to the improvement of marital intimacy (Havasi et al., 2017). The couple's approach of emotional therapy can help couples in reducing marital differences and conflicts (Jalali et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of determining the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on positive emotions, marital intimacy, and personality strengths of elderly women. The present study sought to answer the

following questions: Was emotional couple therapy effective on positive emotions, marital intimacy, and personality abilities of elderly women in the post-test phase? Was the emotion-oriented couple therapy on positive excitement, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women stable in the follow-up phase?

Method

The research method was semi-experimental with pre-test-posttest design with control group, and the statistical population of the study was all elderly women referred to counseling centers in Babol in 2021. The sample size consisted of 30 elderly women who were selected by convenience sampling methods according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The experimental group received couple therapy intervention in 12 sessions of 90 minutes weekly, questionnaires used in this study included positive meta-emotion questionnaire of Mitmansgruber et al.(2009), Thompson and Walker marital intimacy (1993), and personality abilities of Peterson and Seligman (2004). Data were analyzed by repeatedly measuring variance in SPSS software version 22.

Results

The results showed that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities ($p < 0.01$). In other words, emotion-focused couple therapy intervention improved positive meta-emotion, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women.

Conclusion

Considering the growth of the elderly population compared to other age groups and the many physical and psychological problems they face, this study aimed to determine the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on positive emotions, marital intimacy, and personality abilities of elderly women.

The results of this study showed the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on positive emotions, marital intimacy and personality abilities of elderly women. As a result, considering the effective role of this method of intervention in improving psychological characteristics, it can be used for psychological interventions. Since emotion-oriented couple therapy is a relatively cheap, practical and efficient method, the results of this study have practical implications for nursing home planners and specialists. Therefore, it is recommended that counselors and psychologists of nursing homes or psychological service centers and clinics use emotion-oriented couple therapy along with other methods to improve positive emotions, marital intimacy, and personality capabilities of elderly women.

The most important limitations of this study included the use of available sampling methods, the use of self-report tools, the unisex nature of the population, and the limitation of the research population to elderly women in Babol city. Therefore, it is recommended to use sampling methods with less error such as random sampling in future researches. This study was conducted on elderly men and women and elderly men from other cities and the results of this study were compared. Other suggestions are to use interviews to collect data instead of questionnaires or in addition to questionnaires. As a last suggestion, we can mention the comparison of

emotion-oriented couple therapy with other methods derived from the third wave of psychotherapy, such as acceptance and commitment training, compassion training, etc.

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