



Investigating the Effect of Training Behavioral Cognitive Techniques on Instability of Marriage and Likelihood of Divorce

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ABSTRACT

The partners increasingly experience dissatisfaction with their marriage, making them to request divorce. On the other hand, some partners resort to divorce as a means to establish and improve their marriage relationship. This make us to come to the light that the partners need professional intervention and training to cope with the issues they experience in this area. The current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the training programs delivered on Cognitive-Behavioral techniques in improving the stability of marriage and. It also tries to determine how likely couples problems may develop into divorce. The study adopts a quasi-experimental methodology, using pre- and post-tests and control and study groups. The subjects to be studied consisted of 15 individuals as the study group and 15 individuals as the control group. They were selected from clients of the Consultation Center of Birjand county and family court of the county using a multi-stage random sampling method. The study group underwent 8 hours of a training program on Cognitive-Behavioral techniques. Using covariance analysis and independent correlated T-test on the results of the research indicated that the training program on Cognitive-Behavioral techniques will increase the stability of marriage and reduce the likelihood of divorce.

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Introduction

Divorce is a process through which the formal marriage of parents (father and mother) terminates (Akhavan Tafti & Seif, 1378; quoted from Alsharif; Bahrami and Fatehi Zadeh; 1391). Divorce is the most prevalent manifestation of severe conflict existing between two individuals, leading to over half of the couples who had decided to participate in consultation sessions to choose divorce as the solution (Worthington, 2005), based on formal statistics in Iran. The problem is such threatening in Iran that the country is the fourth country in the world ranking considering the ratio of divorce to marriage (Yousefi, 1390). Divorce and collapse of family structure is a social issue with implications that are considered among the most serious problems today societies face with. Divorced women are the target of negative prejudgement in Iran, such that about 90 percents of divorced women cannot get a suitable marriage in the future. In other words, a background involving a divorce is considered a negative point and weakness. The results obtained through studies conducted on marriage and divorce indicated that divorce has been following a rising trend and its ratio to marriage in any year has increased with a worrying rate. Although marriage is considered in all countries as a factor in mental health of the society, but if the marriage fails to meet and satisfy the mental and psychological needs of partners, it not only ensures the mental health, but leaves negative and sometimes irrecoverable effects which may persist long after divorce (Gholami, Jafari and Ghamari, 1392).

Divorce creates negative outcomes including the defects and dysfunction of immune system, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, suicide, change in life style and self-conception, decrease in professional performance, change in social relationship and losing social support. The divorce cases

are increasing in number and the more the rate of divorce is, the more effects and implications it involves and the more it threatens the society. Meanwhile, the effects of divorce on divorced women can be considered. Divorce and collapse of the family structure will lead to psychological-emotional imbalances of family members. Additionally, as a severe stressful experience, it is very probable that the problem lead to psychological disorders especially among the women whose positive emotional delicacies are integral parts of their personality (Haffarian and et al, 1388).

The relationship between partners is very important as a part of family relationships which involves emotional, psychological and sexual aspects (Ezer and et al, 2006). The knowledge and the awareness of couples of the role they must play in all of these aspects to establish fruitful and effective relationships are highly important. If a man or woman knows the obligations he/she had in respect to his partner and succeeds in meeting the requirements and responsibilities, he will able to consolidate the family binds and enhance the family as the building block of the society. This also can help family prevent psychological and mental disorders from arising and aggravating (Gastellanos and et al, 2013). Numerous approaches have been proposed to increase the intimacy of the couples and resolve the related issues, including psychoanalysis, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), relationship therapy, emotions-centric therapy and psychological-educational therapy. Each of the approaches provides a therapeutic perspective to increase the intimacy and resolve the related issues. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy is a method which seeks both to change the behaviors resulted from inadequate and wrong learning and to change the irrational attitude, believes and concepts. Cognitive-Behavioral method acts based on the theory that the way human thinks about

himself and his role in the world is the main factor underpinning his behavior (Sadok, Sadok, 2007).

A study conducted by Javidi, Balghan Abadi and Dehghani Neyshabouri (1393) indicated that the training of Cognitive-Behavioral techniques delivered to partners had increased the scores of couples in sexual satisfaction component. Also, this therapy had been affected women more than men.

In another research, Karami, Fakhr Azari and Ghasem Zadeh (1392) obtained the results showing group consultation based on Cognitive-Behavioral approach have been effective in reducing depression and creating a sense of inefficacy among the children whose parents have chosen divorce as their solution.

Seyyed Gholami, Jafari and Ghamari (1392) study indicated that group consultation based on Cognitive-Behavioral approach was an appropriate method to reduce physical, mental and overall symptoms of anxiety sensitivity among divorced women.

Amani, Younesi and Taleghani (1382) conducted a study in which they investigated the effect of Cognitive-Behavioral therapy in a group setting on the satisfaction with marriage among the female clients of a consultation center. The obtained results of the study suggested Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to be effective in increasing the satisfaction and reducing the depression of women who had family problems, creating realistic attitudes in them for resolving the conflicts and increasing the quality of their sexual-emotional relationship in the marriage.

Saemi (1384) investigated the effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy on satisfaction couples gain from marriage. To this end, they selected the couples that had come to one of consultation centers as the subject of their study. The results of the research showed that the effects of the interventions on how couples were satisfied with their marriage were of significance.

Larson & Harper (2010) examined the family process and psychological signs and concluded that family processes (communication styles, self-expression skills and training styles) decrease the psychological symptoms including anxiety and depression among individuals.

Chang (2008) study indicated that Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy is very effective in increasing the satisfaction of couples with their marriage. Hamamci (2005) investigated the effects group based Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy had on couple satisfaction level. The obtained results suggested a significant difference between the study group who had undergone the training sessions and the control group who had not received such training materials.

Significant scientific efforts have been made to this date to mitigate the conflicts between couples in their marriage. These efforts have led to the creation of interventions strategies which fall into three main groups: 1- Pre-marriage programs to prepare the couples for the marriage (Olson, D.H. & Olson, A.K, 1997), 2- Post-marriage enrichment program (Nicholis & Becvar, 2000), 3- Marriage consultation for conflicting couples (Simon & Helm & Lyman, 1985). There are numerous consultation methods. "behavioral," "cognitive," "psychotherapy" and "systemic" approaches are among the important approaches in marriage consultation (Champion & Power, 2000). Cognitive-Behavioral techniques are among the methods employed to increase the instability of marriage and resolve the couple conflicts.

The main question for which we seek to find an answer in the research is whether training of cognitive-behavioral techniques influences the marriage instability and divorce likelihood?

Research methodology

The current study adopts a quasi-experimental approach involving pre- and post-tests and study and control groups. The statistical population consists of all the clients who had requested divorce or they are in the process of divorce (partners), including both couples who had took initiative on their own to refer to Consultation Center of Birjand county, South Khorasan province and those couples who have been directed by family court of the county to the consultation center during the year 93. The study sample consists of 30 individuals selected from the aforementioned couples using a multi-stage random sampling method.

Research tool

"Marital Instability Index" was used for the first time in the year 1980 for investigating 2034 married men and women who belonged to the age group of below 55 years old. The same method was used for 1578 individuals from this sample in the year 1983. Virtually no other norm or demographic data was reported which could be related to the aforementioned study. This test was conducted by Yari Pour in Iran (2000-2001) on 50 couples who had requested divorce from justice courts and had been directed to family consultation interventions by the court (as the study group), and other couples who had not been directed to the center (as the control group) and had been selected based on their high divorce likelihood. The sampling method used in the study was of the available sample type. The statistical population consisted of those couples who had requested divorce, was resident of Qom city (4000 individuals) and had lived for at least three years with each other. The study conducted by Yari is validated in "Validation" section. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was obtained as -1.95 for the study, indicating its acceptable level of validation. Note that, the aforementioned study was conducted on those couples that had been directed by Qom court to family consultation interventions centers. Additionally, the opinions of several professional professors were sought in Yari study (1379) to evaluate the content of Marital Instability Index test who all were in agreement about the validity of the test questions.

Results

The mean value of divorce susceptibility for study group in pre-test phase is 9.73, while it declined to 7.66 in post-test phase. The statistical significance of this reduction of mean value in the study group was determined with $t=4.92$ and $p=0.0001<0.05$. Also, the mean value of divorce susceptibility in control group is 9 in pre-test phase, while it is 9.33 in post-test phase. The statistical significance of this increase in mean value was determined with $t=2.09$ and $p=0.05$. The effect on the study group is high and significant ($d=5.30$). The mean value of effect in control group is equal to $d=0.080$. So, the results obtained from the study indicate that **Cognitive-Behavioral techniques will increase the marriage stability.**

Firstly, T-test was used to compare pre-test scores of the study and control groups. The obtained results showed that there was not any statistically significant difference between the mean scores of divorce susceptibility in study and control groups for the study sample. Additionally, single-variable co-variance analysis was performed on the post-test scores after controlling the scores obtained in the pre-test for divorce susceptibility. It became evident that there was a significant difference between the scores in the post-test obtained by the study and control groups for divorce susceptibility component (the effect of pre-test was moderated).

Table 1. The results of statistical analysis- comparison of the mean values of divorce-susceptibility for study and control groups in pre- and post tests

Variable	Group	Phase	Number	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	T	Significance	Degree of freedom
Divorce susceptible	Study	Pre-test	15	9.73	0.45	4.92	0.0001	14
		Post-test	15	7.66	1.98			
	Control	Pre-test	15	9	1.46	-2/09	0.05	14
		Post-test	15	9.33	1.04			

Table 2. The results of statistical analysis- comparison of the mean values of divorce likelihood for study and control groups in pre- and post tests

Variable	Group	Phase	Number	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	T	Significance	Degree of freedom
Divorce likelihood	Study	Pre-test	15	0.41	0.02	5.90	0.0001	14
		Post-test	15	0.37	0.04			
	Control	Pre-test	15	0.413	0.024	-0.56	0.58	14
		Post-test	15	0.416	0.022			

The results obtained from statistical analysis as well as the comparison made between the mean scores of study and control groups for divorce susceptibility in pre-test and post-tests phases suggested a significant difference between the two groups. The difference between the mean values of divorce susceptibility of control and study groups in pre-test and post-tests was statistically significant.

We used independent T-test to compare the difference between the scores in pre-test and post-test phases for divorce susceptibility. The results of T-test indicated a significant difference in the statistical sample. Saemi (2005-2006) investigated how Cognitive-Behavioral family therapy was effective on marriage satisfaction of those couples who had referred to one of consultation centers. The results showed the significance of the effectiveness of interventions in improving the satisfaction of couples with their marriage. In a study conducted by Tabrizi (2004-2005), Behavioral-communication related differences of partners were compared between two classes of couples, the first class consisting of 23 couples who were satisfied with their marriage and the second one consisting of 23 couples who had come for consultation sessions. The analysis of the data indicated that compared to those couples who had come for consultation, those couples who were satisfied with their marriage relationships were more consistent and coordinated with their partners in their perceptions considering communication methods they used or the way they should communicate with each other. Additionally, the scores they obtained on marriage consistency was significantly higher than other class of couples. In a research, Feinauer, Larson and Harper (2010) focused their attention on family process and psychological symptoms and came to the realization that family processes (communication styles, self-expression skills and training styles) will lead to reduction in psychological symptoms including anxiety and depression among individuals.

The mean value of divorce for study group is 0.41 and 0.37 in pre-test and post-test phases, respectively. The statistical significance of this reduction of the mean value in the study group was examined with $t=5.90$ and $p=0.0001$. Additionally, the mean value of divorce likelihood for control group is 0.413 and 0.416 in pre-test and post-test phases, respectively. The statistical significance was examined with $t=0.56$ and $p=0.58$. The mean effect for the study group is high and significant ($d=1.33$). The mean effect for control group ($d=0.13$) was not significant (the negative sign can be neglected). Thus, the results obtained in the study indicate that **the training of Cognitive-**

Behavioral techniques delivered to the parents will decrease their divorce likelihood.

Firstly, T-test was used in order to compare the scores obtained by study and control groups in pre-test for the divorce likelihood component. The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean of scores obtained by control and study groups for the mentioned component in the given statistical sample. Additionally, a single variable co-variance analysis was performed on post-test scores for divorce likelihood component after controlling the scores obtained in pre-test phase. The results showed that there was a significant difference between post-test scores of the study and control groups for the mentioned component (the effect of pre-test was moderated). Also, statistical analysis was performed to compare the mean values of divorce likelihood for the study and control groups in the pre- and post-tests. It became evident that there was a significant difference between the mean values of divorce likelihood in study group in pre-test and post-test phases. But, no statistically significant difference was observed between the mean values of divorce likelihood for control group in pre- and post-tests. We employed T-test as a means to determine how the scores for the component were different between pre- and post-tests in study and control groups. A statistically significant difference was observed between the mean values of divorce likelihood in study and control groups in the given sample. The research conducted by Mohye Al Din and et al (1393) suggests that Cognitive-Behavioral group therapy interventions will improve the family process, reduce the destructive conflicts and increase positive and optimistic thinking in daily relationships, finally leading to a correct knowledge of the self and the partner and improving the satisfaction gained from the relationship. The results obtained by the research are consistent with what Javidi, Balghan Abadi and Dehghani Neyshabouri (1392) obtained, in that Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy will increase the sexual satisfaction of couples. These results are also in agreement with the study conducted by Javadi, Ahmadi and Samad Zadhe (2012) in that Cognitive-Behavioral training can be effective on the satisfaction level of marriage among couples.

Divorce and detachment will leave many negative effects on the couples psychologically and physically. These negative effects involve increasing incidence risk of psychological disorders, physical diseases, suicide, accident that leads to death, violence and murder. It also has many negative effects on the children such as depression, seclusion, the weakness of social efficacy, hygiene and education related issues. Equipped to this

knowledge, the researcher of the study took steps into the field and tried to mitigate the likelihood of divorce through training Cognitive-Behavioral techniques. This training is not only a particular way to approach the therapy rather it is a main subject encircling a wide range of opinions, such that it may be considered as a main framework or therapy paradigm. Using the method is of significant importance in helping the couples. Thus, as an integral part of couple therapy, the couples will learn explicitly or implicitly to communicate effectively. In other words, the couples need a teaching method of mentor-pupil type to fill the gap they experience in their abilities and learn more effective methods of communication.

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