



**COMPARING EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY AND
ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY AND SPIRITUAL
INTERVENTIONS ON WOMEN ON THE BRINK OF DIVORCE EMANATING
FROM MARITAL INFIDELITY**

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ABSTRACT

Today cognitive behavioral therapy has greatly attracted attention of researchers. Current paper aims to examine the effectiveness of one of these treatments, i.e. cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and for doing this it compares acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) with spiritual interventions in women on the brink of infidelity divorce. In this article, one draws on a quasi-experimental design with post and pre-test. This article is conducted from 2011 to 2012 in 22 family therapy centers of Tehran Education. Experimental groups include CBT group (50 participants), acceptance and commitment therapy group (18 participants) and spirituality intervention (32 participants). The infidelity questionnaire is used for examining infidelity. Data are analyzed by multivariate analysis of covariance method via SPSS software. Based on results obtained from the article, cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy as well as spiritual intervention produce significant changes in women on the brink of divorce due to marital infidelity.

**Keywords: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment
Therapy (ACT), Spiritual Intervention, Marital Intervention**

INTRODUCTION

Family plays a significant role in formation of social relations between opposite genders. For this reason, endurance of

family is of high importance and is considered as the center of growth and development. Golavski opines that couples

at the beginning of their common life start with love, but gradually the intimacy wears off and over time some relations between coupled end up to divorce, however, contrarily, some couples carry on their common life with bad circumstance and unwillingly they turn toward alcoholism, overeating, substance abuse or illicit relations. One the most significant causes that couples turn toward illicit relations is experiencing individual and sexual intimacy again, which this intimacy lacks in their marital life. As a consequence, charm of illicit relation is owing to the fact that none of parties do not nag or scorn or complain each other (Shoaakazemi, 2010). In 1992, according to a research in Chicago University of United States, it has been concluded that near 25% of married men and 18% of married woman have reported at least one illicit relation over their marital life. Similarly according another findings it has been shown that after disclosure of infidelity, families encounter with marital crisis, decline of performance in parental roles and job problems (Stefano, 2008), main factor is deviation of men and the most important complexity is the manner in which couples interact with each other and presence of deep gap in their trust (Neumann, 2008). In the conducted study of men infidelity, emotional problems (48%), emotional and sexual dissatisfaction

in the same extent (32%), other factors (12%) and sexual dissatisfaction (8%) are reported. In fact marital infidelity is establishing sexual relation with someone other than the spouse, this act somehow leads to damage in the life partner, and however, this occurs annually widely within marital lives (Laumann & Gagnon, 1994). For this reason, marital infidelity is considered as the most significant cause of divorce among couples (Shackelford, 2008). Similarly marital infidelity is as a tool through which without one undertake a noticeable criminal wrongdoing, it shows the darker side of its personality (Spitzberg& Capach, 1998). Women appreciate emotional dependency more than men and their sexual relation comply this too. This shows that the developmental need of women for thorough trust to husband commitment and his satisfaction to sharing resources in prior to having sexual intercourse with her. Sexual fantasy of two genders clearly shows this difference. In such manner that men have more sexual fantasy than women and within these fantasies usually strangers step in, but women sexual fantasy is often characterized by private themes (Ellis & Symons, 1990). Today, couple psychologists and therapists pay special attention to marital infidelity, however, in spite of prevalence of this

problem one still fails to conceptualize the marital infidelity or to understand the manner in which therapeutic design can be devised (Weismann & Dixon, 1997). Clinical observations and scientific studies demonstrate that disclosure of infidelity has drastic impact on couples. Clinical experts have reported that among victims of infidelity, intense emotions fluctuate between anger toward the culprit and the inner sentiments such as shame, depression and overwhelming weakness, feeling being victim and abandoned (Spring, 1996). By this token, this study aims to compare effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and spiritual intervention on women on the brink of divorce due to infidelity to examine which methods is more effective in marital infidelity. Similarly, we attempt to understand these three methods.

Cognitive behavioral therapy

One of the therapeutic approaches for those who sustained trauma is cognitive behavioral therapy which the extent of its effectiveness in reducing pathologic symptoms has been identified. Similarly, Cognitive behavioral therapy is based on learning, and stresses on the ability to compatible and non-compatible behaviors and the manner in which it changes. Narimani et al (2011) in their study have

shown that this method is effective in reducing symptoms of marital infidelity. Conducted studies show that marital infidelity has high prevalence and men cheat more than women in their marital life. The experience of infidelity as a pathogenic interpersonal event results in cognitive, affective and behavioral symptoms. Considering the vulnerability of female gender it seems that the women suffer more than men from symptoms related to this pathogenic event, because experiencing such pathogenic event from the most intimate part i.e. the husband can result in wearing off the interpersonal trust and rise of negative sentiments such as anger, decline of self-confidence and so on. Clinical findings regarding victims of marital infidelity show that these symptoms, particularly assumptions which is made by the victim after this experience about trust, life, future and husband endure even for years after this event and abandonment and compensation by the husband, and this can have negative influence on quality of family life and relation with other member of family and in particular children too. Considering what has mention so far and the need to present effective interventions for people encountered infidelity, this paper aims to examine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy and acceptance and

commitment therapy and spiritual intervention on women on the brink of divorce due to marital infidelity.

Acceptance and commitment therapy

Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is a behavioral therapy approach which seeks to change the function of thoughts and feelings. ACT stems from a philosophical theory of functional contextualism and is based on a research plan about language and cognition which is known as relational frame theory (Hayes et al, 1993). ACT includes six central processes which result in psychological flexibility as follows:

Acceptance, diffusion, self as a context, values and committed action (Hayes, 2006). Role and advantage of this therapy with respect to other approaches is considering motivational aspects together with cognitive aspects for further influence and endurance of therapy effectiveness. It opines that what is out of control of personality should be accepted and one should be committed to what makes his/her life richer. This approach aims to help the patient to bring about a rich, thorough and meaningful life along with the inevitable sufferance inherent in the life (Izadi & Abedi, 2013).

Causes of using acceptance and commitment therapy

One of causes of using this type of therapy is focus on evaluation and development a therapeutic plan. This therapy does not address the stems but it seeks to evaluate the behavioral performance. ACT emphasizes on effort for controlling annoying experiences and weakening these processes (Hiz, 1999). The main objective of this type of therapy in this article is helping to every woman on the brink of divorce to be able to vanish the marital infidelity using this type of therapy (Peterson, 2009). ACT teaches women the methods for raising the level of affection and intimacy toward spouses and attracting their trust (Amanollah et al, 2014). ACT is different from CBT. The underlying principles of ACT rely on:

- 1) Acceptance and tendency to experiencing pain or other distressing events without undertaking to control them.
- 2) Value-based action or commitment with tendency to action as meaningful individual objectives before eliminating undesired experiences.

This is linguistic methods and cognitive processes which in interaction with other nonverbal independencies result in healthy function. This method uses practices based on encountering, linguistic metaphors and methods of mind care (Wallace et al, 2003).

ACT is a therapy method for bringing about mental flexibility, that is, developing ability to choose an action among different options which is more suitable, not a merely undertaking or imposing action for avoiding thoughts, feelings, memories or distressing tendencies (Forman & Herbert, 2008). In this method, firstly it is attempted to increase mental acceptance about a mental experience (thoughts, feelings) and similarly to decrease ineffective controlling actions. The patient is taught that any action for avoiding or controlling these unselective mental experience is ineffective or has reverse impact and leads to intensifying it. At the second place, one raise the mental awareness in the present moment, in other word, one becomes aware to all of its psychological moods, thoughts and behaviors at present time. At third place, the patient is taught to detach itself from its mental experience (cognitive detachment), to be able to act independent from these experience. At fourth place, it is attempted to reduce the excessive concentration on self-visualization of personal story (for example being victim) which is made in the patient's mind. In the fifth place, in order to help to identify the main personal values and clarify them and turn them into certain behavioral objectives.

Spiritual intervention therapy

Spirituality influences on people behaviors. Due to the fact that people believe in spirituality, they believe that spirituality is a power out of their existence which encompasses existential and higher dimensions of life (Keshmir & Akbari, 2011). One of fundamental concepts among people is spirituality (Rij, 2005) which is surveyed by psychologists and mental health experts (West, 2001). It is noted that spirituality has two aspects (Jafari & Dehshiri, 2009):

1. Religious spirituality: in which notion of holy existence or extreme reality is expressed in a religious manner.
2. Existential spirituality: in which some psychological experiences that are not related to holy existence are taken into consideration. Religious and spirituality have bearing on its adaption.

From other side, spiritual intervention therapy somehow results in enhancing people life quality. Over time and by considering the progression of psychology, importance of man spiritual needs increases against material desires and needs. Considering conducted studies, today people pay more attention to spirituality than in the past. Furthermore, experts opine that merely using traditional and simple methods for therapy and addressing

problems are not sufficient. In fact from past so far there has been a strong relation between psychology and religion. But some psychologists such as Freud and Skinner disregard value of spirituality and religion, even they opined that such therapies are harmful. Freud believed that religious cause annoyance of psyche. He associates the need of human to religious to early experience of childhood which stems from child's inability and as a consequence showing need and interest to the father and this relation is undeniable. Freud refers to religion as presenting false justifications for life ambiguities where the companionate god plays the role of father and people can ask him during prayer. By spreading spirituality interventions therapy and conducted studies, the effectiveness of this therapy in different disorders has been proved. Among these interventions one can refer to prayer, meditation, reading holy texts, forgiveness and repentance, worshiping and rituals, accompaniment and kindness, receiving spiritual guide and ethical teachings. According to conducted studies, spirituality interventions can be effective in fields such as depression, alcoholism, anxiety, eating disorders, anger, resent and marital infidelity and the latter is subject of this study.

In this respect, regarding the subject of this article some studies have been conducted which we point out to some of them.

Findings of research done by Moein et al (2011) with a sample consisted of 30 couples showed that spirituality interventions result in reducing emotional annoyance and its dimension (verbal annoyance, criticizing, negligence, withdrawal, dominance and social limitations) among couples.

Christian et al (2011) in a study have concluded that non-adjusted couples which receive acceptance and commitment education show higher marital satisfaction and mental health in a three month follow-up in comparison with their counterpart in control group.

Nouri & Kazemi (2011), in a study have concluded that cognitive behavioral therapy results in increase of forgiveness in women. Findings showed that women who participated in cognitive behavioral courses in comparison with control group have more tendency to forgive the mistakes of their husbands.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Current research plan is experimental in which the pre and posttest scheme is used. Independent variable the independent variable is group membership (CBT, ACT and spiritual intervention) and dependent variable is participants' scores of infidelity

symptoms tools in posttest. Participants' scores in pretest of these tools are considered as control variable.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Impacts of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), group therapy based on acceptance and commitment therapy and group therapy based on spiritual inventions are different on women emotional infidelity on the brink of divorce.

Impacts of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), group therapy based on acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and group therapy based on spiritual interventions are different on women sexual infidelity on the brink of divorce.

Statistical population and sample

Statistical population of this study is consisted of all women on the brink of divorce for marital infidelity in age range of 20 to 50, educational degree of diploma and bachelor who have gone to 22 family therapy centers of Tehran education in 2011-2012. Choosing sample in this study is purposeful sampling and researcher selected required participants among volunteers of participating in sessions of these three therapies (CBT, ACT and spiritual intervention). So, firstly a wide notification has taken place in family therapy centers of Tehran education department. Near 150 female participants involved in marital infidelity issue have

been introduced by counselors of these centers to researchers. Women have been divided into three groups, i.e. CBT (50 participants), ACT (50 participants) and spiritual intervention (50 participants). Some information have been offered to participants regarding the type of treatment, the manner of attendance in the courses, and time of sessions. then participants have been registered by filling infidelity questionnaire and interviews have been carried out. It is worth to mention that the questionnaire has been only validated and in the existing sample, this score has been recognized as acceptable by experts. Evaluation items are: belief to monogamy, mutual attraction, and sexual infidelity, and emotional infidelity, total number of infidelity occurrences, negative emotions, forgiveness process and failure in forgiveness. Data have been analyzed through multivariate analysis of covariance via SPSS software.

Measurement tool

The used tool in the article includes infidelity measurement questionnaire which is devised based on Waghan questionnaire and at first the researcher translated it to confirm its correctness. This questionnaire is consisted of 35 articles in the sexual and emotional context. Its validity of content and form has been evaluated by family therapy experts.

it is worth to mention that experiencing infidelity has been remained unresolved for women and all of them have one of the following circumstances. 1. Either they have divorced and live in their parental home. 2. They were on the brink of divorce. 3. Since their husbands have cheated and this has been just disclosed, the wife lives in previous home with children and separated from the husband.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings of current research are presented in two descriptive and inferential sections.

Descriptive findings

Participants' background information

Statistical indexes of study variables

Statistical indexes of infidelity variable are presented in pretest for each three groups of participants.

Table 1: participants background information

variables	average	Standard deviation
Wife age	29	8.9
Husband age	31	7.6
Marriage age	21	4.9
Marriage duration	8.9	5.6

Table 2: statistical indexes of infidelity variables in pretest

variables	groups	number	average	Standard deviation
Emotional	CBT group therapy	50	25.21	0.215
	ACT group therapy	50	23.65	0.231
	Spiritual group therapy	50	21.67	0.654
Sexual	CBT group therapy	50	31.25	0.421
	ACT group therapy	50	30.25	0.355
	Spiritual group therapy	50	29.54	0.333

Statistical indexes of infidelity variable are presented in posttest for each three groups of participants.

Table 3: statistical indexes of infidelity variables in posttest

variables	groups	number	average	Standard deviation
Emotional	CBT group therapy	50	18.32	0.326
	ACT group therapy	50	16.54	0.321
	Spiritual group therapy	50	12.32	0.654
Sexual	CBT group therapy	50	23.21	0.524
	ACT group therapy	50	22.36	0.946
	Spiritual group therapy	50	21.63	0.354

Inferential statistics

Results of variance analysis test for examining hypothesis and difference in three kin of treatment for infidelity in three groups of women are presented in following table.

First hypothesis:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), ACT based group therapy and spiritual group therapy influence on emotional infidelity of women on the brink of divorce.
- Null hypothesis: Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), ACT

based group therapy and spiritual group therapy don't influence on emotional infidelity of women on the brink of divorce.

Since for analyzing and comparing average, three groups are examined, for examining and comparing the average of three groups we use analysis of variance (ANOVA). One of the advantages of ANOVA is that only by once testing, the difference between averages of all groups in the study is examined. Null hypothesis in this test is equality of averages of groups and the contrary hypothesis in inequality of

averages. This test between all groups in fact instead of several partial and small test, examines all information at once.

Relying on the value of ANOVA test and P-Value<0.05 with confidence of 95%, one can say that the null hypothesis based on inequality of averages is rejected. However, since this general test is carried out between all groups, to examine which couple of groups is significant the post hoc test is conducted to examine the statistic hypothesis. In this study, Duncan's post hoc test is used.

Table 4: ANOVA results

	Sum of squares	df	Squares mean	F	Sig.
Intra-group	42.767	2	21.384	664.451	0.000
Inter-group	1.352	148	0.032		
Total	44.119	150			

Table 5: Results of Duncan test

Therapeutic groups	Alpha=0.05		
	1	2	3
Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)	18.32	—	—
Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)	—	16.54	—
Spiritual intervention therapy	—	—	12.32
Sig.	1.000	1.000	1.000

Generally Duncan's test put the averages of groups which are not different from each other in one subgroup. For this reason, the obtained results from above table show that based on Duncan's test the averages of emotional infidelity variable in three groups are different from each other. In other word, difference of averages of emotional infidelity variable in each three therapeutic groups which has been proved by significance F test is stemming from

difference between treatments with each other.

Second hypothesis:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), ACT based group therapy and spiritual group therapy influence on sexual infidelity of women on the brink of divorce.
- Null hypothesis: Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), ACT based group therapy and spiritual group therapy don't influence on

sexual infidelity of women on the brink of divorce.

As for analyzing and comparing average, three groups are studied, for examining and comparing the average of three groups we draw on analysis of variance (ANOVA). One of the benefits of ANOVA is that only by once testing, the difference between averages of all groups in the study is surveyed. Null hypothesis in this test is equality of averages of groups and the contrary hypothesis in inequality of averages. This test between all groups in fact instead of several partial and small test, examines all information at once.

Based on the value of ANOVA test and P-Value<0.05 with confidence of 95%, one can note that the null hypothesis based on inequality of averages is rejected. Yet,

since this general test is carried out between all groups, to study which couple of groups is significant the post hoc test is conducted to examine the statistic hypothesis. In this study, Duncan's post hoc test is used.

Generally Duncan's test put the averages of groups which are not different from each other in one subgroup. Thus, the obtained results from above table indicate that based on Duncan's test the averages of sexual infidelity variable in three groups are different from each other, they are in three separate groups. In other word, difference of averages of sexual infidelity variable in each three therapeutic groups which has been proved by significance F test is stemming from difference between treatments with each other.

Table 6: ANOVA results

	Sum of squares	df	Squares mean	F	Sig.
Intra-group	15544.097	2	15.25	18.653	0.000
Inter-group	2.273	148	0.542		
Total	15551.3	150	5.049	18.653	0.000

Table 7, Results of Duncan test

Therapeutic groups	Alpha=0.05		
	1	2	3
Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)	23.21	—	—
Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)	—	22.36	—
Spiritual intervention therapy	—	—	21.63
Sig.	1.000	1.000	1.000

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Man and women begin their life with love; however it is likely that over time the initial intimacy loses its color in the path of life. Among some couples, this love may end up to divorce. One of the most essential causes of directing toward illicit relations, is the eagerness to experience the private and

sexual intimacy and warmth once again, because they no longer experience such warmth in their own marital life. Charm of illicit relations is due to the fact that no one nag, complain and scorn the other one, similarly, it has been revealed that after disclosure of infidelity, families encounter with issues such as marital crisis, poor

performance in parental roles and job complexities. For the same reason, marital infidelity is recognized as the most essential cause of couples divorce. Also, marital infidelity is as a tool by which without committing any explicit criminal violation, exhibit the dark aspect of the personality. Today psychologists and couple therapist pay a special attention to marital infidelity, however in spite of wide spread of this issue one fails to conceptualize the marital infidelity or to obtain a therapeutic scheme for this problem. Clinical observations and scientific studies shows that the victim of marital infidelity often experience severe emotions such as anger toward the culprit and inner sentiments such as shame, depression and overwhelming weakness, feeling being victim and abandoned.

Considering the study conducted by Moein et al, results of their study were consistent with the third hypothesis of this article. Similarly, results of Tirtashi & Kazemi's study were consistent with the first hypothesis of this paper.

By examining the conducted studies by Christian, Ellis, Brown, Vallis and Simon we conclude in this paper that results of their study was consistent with second hypothesis of this paper.

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