



**International Journal of Biology, Pharmacy
and Allied Sciences (IJBPAS)**

'A Bridge Between Laboratory and Reader'

www.ijbpas.com

**THE EFFECT OF SCHEMA THERAPY ON RESILIENCY LEVEL AMONG WOMEN
ON THE VERGE OF DIVORCE IN TEHRAN**

MARYAM PANAHI^{1,2*}, Dr. HAMED BERMAS³, Dr. PARVIZ SHARIFI DARAMADI⁴

1-Department of General Psychology, Shahrood Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Shahrood, Iran (marypan73@yahoo.com)

2- Department of General Psychology, Shahrood Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrood, Iran

3-Department of Counselling, College of Psychology, Karaj branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

4-Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in order to investigate the effect of schema therapy on the resiliency among women who were on the verge of divorce in Tehran in 2015. The study design was experimental with a pretest, a posttest, and a control group. The study population consisted of all divorce applicants including applicants referred by themselves or by the family court of Tehran. From among them, 60 were selected through a multistage simple random sampling and were assigned into two groups of 30 homogenous students; an experimental group and a control one. The study instruments included demographic questionnaire, the inventory of tendency toward divorce, and Young's Schema Questionnaire-Short Form (1995) that were administered in pretest phase. Afterwards, the protocol of schema therapy was carried out over 7 sessions. Finally, the questionnaires were administered again in posttest phase. The collected data were analyzed. The results of the present study indicate that periods of schema therapy can enhance the level of resiliency and reduce the rate of divorce. Schema therapy can have a significant effect on and reduce conflicts having root in the past can. It can also enhance the level of resiliency among individuals in the face of conjugal problems.

Keywords: Schema Therapy, Resiliency Level, Divorce

INTRODUCTION

Bonanno (2004) believes that resiliency can be obtained through tenacity, self-promotion, repressive opposition, possession of positive feelings and mood. Resiliency is not just resistance against damages or threatening situations and an inactive status in the face of dangerous conditions, but it is active participation in one's surrounding environment. It can be stated that resiliency is the individual's capacity to establish biological-mental balance in dangerous situations [2]. Moreover, researchers believe that resiliency is a type of self-restoration using positive exciting, emotional, and cognitive events [3].

Resiliency variable has an indirect effect on the level of satisfaction with life. In other words, resiliency results in positive attitude and thus satisfaction with life by influencing the types of the individuals' feelings and excitements. Reduction in the level of resiliency against life events is associated with mental pressure, anxiety, and/or depression. In other words, the first result of enhancing an individual's capacity of resiliency is a reduction in emotional and mental problems, an increase in mental health, and thus a rise in the individual's satisfaction with life [4].

Schema refers to mental patterns and assumptions about the realities of the outside world [5]. After a child is born, he assumes whatever it sees and experiences as reality; however, reality is something different.

In explaining the effectiveness of schema therapy it should be stated that it provides the opportunity for change by affecting the individual's different dimensions including cognitive, experimental, emotional, and behavioral aspects. In the cognitive dimension, by focusing on the internalized voices of the parents, i.e. the deepest level of cognition, schema therapy tries to help dissatisfied couples become aware of the root of their thoughts and challenge the schema and uncontrolled thoughts and obtain a new attitude toward conjugal relationships by examining the reliability of the schema and figuring out a new definition for the evidence to reject or approve the schema. Over years, individuals highlight information that is in agreement with the schema and ignore the information that is in disagreement, and this procedure will continue in conjugal relationship, and they observe how the schema fight for its survival in conjugal relationships [5].

Divorce is the most significant cause of disruption in the structure of the most fundamental part of the society, i.e. family.

Literally, it means get rid of marriage and terminating the marriage covenant. It is a contractual phenomenon that enables man and woman to terminate their marriage and get separated [6].

Studies have indicated that schema therapy can be effective in reducing the tendency to get divorce [5]. Schema-based treatment of couples is effective in improving the couples' function [7]. Initial incompatible schemas play an important role in predicting mental welfare among divorced women [8] and in occurrence of divorce risk [9]. Solution-based treatment can influence the resiliency and boredom of divorced couples [10]. The intervention group treated with schema-based method is a more effective method in improving the individual's overall function compared to methods [11]. All in all, ignorance of childhood causes formation of incompatible schema-based approaches in adulthood which threaten emotional control [12].

In explaining the effectiveness of schema therapy, it should be stated that schema therapy provides the opportunity for changes by the individual's multiple dimensions, these dimensions include cognitive, experimental, emotional, and behavioral aspects. In the cognitive dimension, by focusing on the internalized voices of the parents, i.e. the

deepest level of cognition, schema therapy tries to help dissatisfied couples become aware of the root of their thoughts and challenge the schema and uncontrolled thoughts and obtain a new attitude toward conjugal relationships by examining the reliability of the schema and figuring out a new definition for the evidence to reject or approve the schema. Over years, individuals highlight information that is in agreement with the schema and ignore the information that is in disagreement, and this procedure will continue in conjugal relationship, and they observe how the schema fight for its survival in conjugal relationships. As a summary of the individual's healthy responses, identification of the schema origin, and inefficient thoughts, schema is the best aid helping the individual identify schema-motivating situations, spot negative behaviors, and how to replace healthy behaviors in conjugal relationships, which results in the individual being aware of the schemas and provides the conditions for the individual and thus the couples' relationship to change [5].

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned points, the present study was intended to respond to the question whether schema therapy has a significant effect on resiliency of women who

are on the verge of divorce or indent to get divorce.

METHODOLOGY

Based on its hypothesis, the present study was conducted using a quasi-experimental method, including a pretest, a posttest, and a control group. The study population was consisted of all divorce applicants (spouses) including applicants referred by themselves or by the family court of Tehran. Purposive sampling was used to randomly select 60 participants from among the divorce applicants, who were assigned into two groups of 30.

The protocol of the schema therapy in 7 sessions was as follow:

First session: Familiarization of the participants and creation of trust-based good relationship and announcing the principles and goals of the group, completion of the three questionnaires by the participants

Second session: Getting familiar with the concept of schema and its different types and initial incompatible schemas

Third session: Identifying initial incompatible schema in the group members and explaining their effect on conjugal life

Fourth session: Proposing the logic of cognitive techniques and then implementing cognitive techniques such as carrying out the reliability test of the schema, presenting new

definitions of proving evidence of the schema, using the therapeutic style of sympathetic encounter and assigning homework for next session

Fifth session: Implementing cognitive techniques of establishing dialog between healthy and schema aspects, training and compiling and creating educational cards and completing the form of schema record and presenting homework and feedback

Sixth session: Presenting logic and the goal of the behavioral techniques, determining a comprehensive list of behaviors that need to change, prioritizing behaviors to break the patterns and determining the most problem-causing behavior

Seventh session: Receiving feedback from previous sessions, training replacement of positive schemas, summarizing the skills, re-completing the questionnaires of the study, acknowledgements, saying goodbye, ending the sessions.

The study instruments and scales included:

A. Demographic questionnaire: Like age, education, marriage age, etc.

B. The Conner-Davidson resilience scale (2003): A 25-item questionnaire that assesses resilience using a 5-point Likert scale (0-4, never, seldom, sometimes, and always). The minimum resilience score in this scale is 0 and the maximum score is 100. The average

score is 50, scores lower than 50 indicate more resilience. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was calculated through alpha coefficient and reported to be 87% by Siyamaki, Hokar, and Sahragard (2207).

C. Divorce tendency scale: This scale was designed by Rouselet, Johnson, and Morrow (2001). It contains 28 questions that are aimed at identifying the couples that tend to get divorce. It covers 4 dimensions each of which includes 7 questions. These dimensions are tendency to get out of marriage (tendency to divorce), tendency to negligence, feeling expression, and faithfulness. Each item is scored using a 7-point scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=very little, 4=little, 5=much, 6=very much, and 7=always). Therefore, the scores of this questionnaire are calculated by summing up the scores of these items. The above score indicates the high tendency toward divorce among the participants. In the present study, two dimensions, i.e. tendency to get out and tendency to neglect, were taken into consideration. In statistical analysis of the questionnaire, Rouselet, Johnson, and Morrow reported the alpha coefficient to be 91% (tendency toward divorce), 76% (feeling expression), 63% (faithfulness), and 86% (negligence). This questionnaire was normalized in Iran by Dawudi, E'temadi, and Bahrami who reported its total Cronbach's

alpha to be 0.88, 0.87 for women, and 0.89 for men.

D. Young's Schema Questionnaire-Short Form (1995): It has 75 questions and is designed to measure the initial incompatible cognitive schema including emotional deprivation, abandonment, mistrust, social isolation, deficit, dependency, vulnerability to loss, undeveloped self, compliance, emotional inhibition, sacrifice, irrelevant criteria, inadequate self-control, entitlements, and failure. Each of these 75 items of the questionnaire in a 5-point Likert scale is scored from "It is not at all true about me" to "It describes me quite well". The individual's score in each schema is calculated by summing up the scores of the 5 questions related to that schema. High scores indicate that the schema is inefficient and the minimum score each schema is 5 and the maximum is 25. A total score can be defined for each questionnaire, which is the sum of the individual's scores in 15 schemas and it ranges between 75 and 375.

RESULTS

In the present study, most women applying for a divorce aged between 27-38 years. Their age difference was between 1 and 7 years, and most of them resided in Tehran, holding a diploma or bachelor's degree. They had been married for 3 to 12 years.

As was seen in Table 1, in the pretest stage and on the verge of divorce in the pretest the mean and standard deviation are changing in the schema therapy group and are respectively 65.23 and 8.01 and after the schema therapy become 22.23 and 6.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the scores of tendency toward divorce among divorce applicants according to test stages

Variable	Test Stages	Groups	Criteria	Statistical
			Mean	SD
Tendency toward divorce	Pretest	Schema Therapy	65.23	8.01
		Resiliency	72.34	7.20
		Control Group	75.54	9.45
	Posttest	Schema Therapy	22.23	6
		Resiliency	23.21	3.11
		Control Group	74.17	7

Table 2. The results of covariance analysis of the scores related to tendency toward divorce among divorce-seeking applicants

Variable	Change Source	Total Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Tendency to Divorce	Pretest	163	1	163	7.20	0.009
	Group	26702.22	2	13351.11	590.75	0.0001
	Error	1335.01	62	22.62		-

There is a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of tendency toward divorce. In other words, due to the mean of tendency toward divorce among the experimental groups compared to the control group, it resulted in a drop in tendency to divorce in the experimental groups. There is a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of tendency toward divorce. In other words, the tendency toward divorce dropped in the experimental groups due to their mean tendency toward divorce compared to the control group. Therefore, the study hypothesis is accepted, i.e. the level of resiliency decreased as result

of schema therapy among women that are about to get divorces.

DISCUSSION

A review of previous studies indicated that there is no research investigating the effect of schema therapy and resiliency on reduced tendency toward divorce. However, since the dimensions of conjugal satisfaction, conjugal conflict, and agreeability are considered as the facilitating factors of tendency toward divorce and are among the factors of such tendency, the results of the present study are in agreement with theoretical basis of schema therapy (changing and modifying the initial incompatible schemas) and also the results of different studies [5, 7, 8, 9, & 10].

In explaining the effectiveness of schema therapy it should be stated that it provides the opportunity for change by affecting the individual's different dimensions including cognitive, experimental, emotional, and behavioral aspects. This schema is aimed at weakening the initial incompatible schemas and creating healthy schemas. In schema therapy, the therapist helps the applicant make more healthy choices and put aside his previous incompatible and behavioral patterns. Due to its effect on psychological health or the initial incompatible schemas among individuals with a tendency toward divorce, the approach of schema therapy can have a remarkable effect on a reduction of tendency toward separation and divorce.

From a cognitive perspective, by focusing on the internalized voices of the parents, i.e. the deepest level of cognition, schema therapy tries to help dissatisfied couples become aware of the root of their thoughts and challenge the schema and uncontrolled thoughts and obtain a new attitude toward conjugal relationships. This technique helps with the individual's emotional discharge in conjugal relationships so that the individual can understand his unsatisfied emotional needs that have led to formation of incompatible schemas.

CONCLUSION

Since schema therapy is utilized as a therapeutic technique in clinical studies, this method deals with restoring incompatible schemas that are resulted from childhood experiences. This method and therapeutic style can play a significant role in improving conjugal problems such a divorce and separation and reduce the initial incompatible schemas because the origin of such schemas is the childhood heritage that can be observed in conjugal dissatisfaction and divorce cases.

REFERENCES

- 1-Bonanno, G.A.(2005) Loss.Trauma, and Human Resilience. Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events? *American Psychologist*, 59 (1), 20-28.
- 2 - Conner, K M., & Davidson, J.R.T (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Conner-Davidson resilience scale (CD-disc). *Depression and Anxiety*, 18, 76-82.
- 3- Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238.
- 4- Lazarus, A. (2004). Relationships among indicators of child and family resilience and adjustment following the September 11, 2001 tragedy. The Emory center for myth and ritual in American life. Available on: www.Marila.emory.edu/faculty/Lazarus.

-
5. Yusefi, N. (2011). Comparing the effectiveness of family therapy based on schema therapy and Bowen's emotional therapy system on divorce tendency among divorce applicant clients. *Clinical Psychology Journal*, 3(3). (In Persian)
 - 6- Kupper D(1989), The social science encyclopedia: London, Routledge.
 7. Bahmani, M.; Refahi, Zh. & Ghaderi, Z. (2012). Exploring the effect of couple schema therapy on improvement of the student couples' performance. *The Journal of Psychiatric Methods and Models*, 2(2), 29. (In Persian).
 8. Haghparast, N (2013). The role of initial incompatible schemas in predicting the welfare among divorce-seeking women. Unpublished MA Thesis. Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Iran. (In Persian)
 9. Basiri, A. (2013). Investigating the effect of initial incompatible schemas on enhancing the probability of divorce and the moderating effect of relationship patterns and document styles of the couples, Unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Humanitarians and Management, Elm va Farhang University, Iran. (In Persian)
 10. Mirzavand, A. (2013). The effect of solution-based treatment on conjugal resiliency and boredom among couples seeking a divorce. Unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences. Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz. (In Persian)
 - 11- Farrell JM, Shaw IA, Webber MA. "A Schema focused approach group Psychotherapy for Outpatients with Borderline Personality Disorder: A controlled trial". *J Behav Psychotherapy and Expert Psychiatry*. 2009; 40(2): 317- 328.
 12. Dougherty Wright, Margaret O'. Crawford Emily. Del Castillo Darren. (2009) Childhood emotional maltreatment and later psychological distress among college students: The mediating role of maladaptive schemas. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Volume 33, Issue 1, Pages 59–68.