

The Effect of Interpersonal Therapy on Reducing Negative Feelings, the Degree of Forgiveness and Restoring Confidence among Women Afflicted with Marital Infidelity

Mehrvan Momeni Javid^a, Mehrangiz Shoaakazemi^b, Fariba Ebrahimi Tazekand^c and Negar Bahmani^d

^a, Department of Counseling, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

^b, Department of Counseling, Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran.,

^c, Department of Counseling, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

^d, Department of Counseling, Allame Tabatabaie university, Tehran, Iran.

Corresponding Author:

Mehrvan Momeni Javid, Mehravarmomeni_psy_au@yahoo.com, 09123947746

Abstract: Infidelity discussed as one of the important problems in marital relationship and the most important reason for divorce and also is a complex treatment for family counselor. The purpose of this study is the effect of interpersonal therapy on reducing negative feelings, the degree of forgiveness and restoring confidence among women afflicted with marital infidelity. Method of research was semi-experimental (pre-Test, Post-Test) with control group. Participants were all betrayed women who have recourse to Tehran family counseling clinics in 2010-2011. Sampling was purposeful in which 16 women who have higher score in forgiving the infidelity of the spouse questionnaire were selected and randomly divided into two groups (8 subjects each). Experimental group received 8 sessions of interpersonal therapy once a week. A tool of research was forgiving the infidelity of the spouse questionnaires with 25 questions. Its three subscales consist of Negative Feelings, the Degree of Forgiveness and Restoring Confidence. Covariance & Mancova analysis were used for data analysis. The results of this study showed the significant effect of interpersonal therapy on Reducing Negative Feelings, increasing Degree of Forgiveness and Restoring Confidence among Women Afflicted with Marital Infidelity. ($p < 0.05$)

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Introduction:

Infidelity is crossing over the border of marital relationship and establishing intimate physical or emotional bonds with another person out of wedlock (Drigotas & Barta, 2001). Occurrence of infidelity has an important role in creating stress in marital relationship (Snyder, 2005) and bringing numerous psychological-social problems to the surface. In such circumstances, people reveal strong emotions such as denial, anger, fury and depression (Brand & et al, 2007).

Considering the fact that illegitimate relations lead to various negative reactions, the process of consulting these people is not predictable as they do not follow a regular pattern of treatment (Stefano & Oala, 2008). Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) is a method of treatment which enjoys wide empirical support. This technique for treatment is believed to be the most prominent one among all clinical treatment methods (Markowitz & et al, 2009). The focus of the treatment are "here and now" and also the specific problems the patient experiences. The objective of IPT treatment is to promote and improve the individual's social function and to reduce symptoms of extreme grief, sadness, isolation, seclusion and self-destructive behaviors (Markowitz, 2010). The other variable of the study is forgiveness which is introduced as a measure and strategy for healing from infidelity. There is a difference of opinion on defining and conceptualizing

"forgiveness", therefore different definitions have been presented. "The process of being relieved from the past judgments and understandings", "being relieved from acquired and normal responses" and "an endeavor to heal the past wounds" are among these definitions (Brush & et al, 2001). Forgiveness should not be mistaken for reconciliation, legal pardon, condoning, and forgetting. Forgiveness is a process within an individual during which the cognitive, emotive, and behavioral aspects of the individual towards the wrong act and also the wrong-doer change (Macaskill, 2005). The most important features of forgiveness are a decrease in negative feelings and an increase in positive feeling. These aspects are widely agreed upon (Rye & et al, 2001). Gordon, Baucom and Snyder (2004) have expanded a three-stage model for forgiveness for spouses who are afflicted with infidelity: 1) contact 2) exploring the reasons 3) recovery. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between forgiveness and satisfaction with life (Teresa & et al, 2003). Most researchers consider forgiveness as an adaptive behavior and believe lack of forgiveness is linked to psychological stress and trauma and on the other hand forgiveness is linked to health (Thompson & et al, 2005; Diblasio & Benda, 2008;). A trauma like infidelity and spousal unfaithfulness can be different to some extent from one society to the other; hence it is necessary that the treatment measures and strategies for such a trauma be

presented according to the society's cultural, humanitarian and social specifications. In the Iranian society, due to cultural issues, infidelity is not the first and foremost reason for lodging a divorce either by the spouse who has been infidel or the spouse who has been subjected to infidelity. In most cases, what the spouses want is to flee the pain and suffering inflicted by the mistake and return to the status quo ante and the normal situation. Taking into consideration that so far no research has been carried out on the therapeutic interventions for forgiveness after the marital infidelity, it is necessary that a research be carried out to help couples get free from the infidelity disaster, heal from the trauma, and revive the marital life. It is also essential that couples jointly enter into the process of treatment, but because of some societal factors, men in the Iranian society avoid accepting the issue and taking up any possible changes towards improvement, hence therapists inevitably have to start their job with one of the spouses and look for the results in the marital life. The objective of the current research is to study the efficacy of therapy with interpersonal approach on reducing negative feelings, the degree of forgiveness and restoring confidence among women afflicted with marital infidelity.

According to the objective and the background it is hypothesized that:

1-Treatment with interpersonal approach has a positive effect on reducing women's negative feelings, increasing forgiveness and restoring confidence among women Afflicted with Marital Infidelity.

1-1-Treatment with interpersonal approach has a positive effect on reducing women's negative feelings

1-2-Treatment with interpersonal approach has a positive effect on increasing forgiveness.

1-3-Treatment with interpersonal approach has a positive effect on restoring confidence among women.

2. Methodology

Method of research was semi-experimental (pre-Test, Post-Test) with control group. Participants were all betrayed women who have recourse to Tehran family counseling clinics in 2010-2011. Sampling was purposeful in which 16 women who have higher score in forgiving the infidelity of the spouse questionnaire were selected and randomly divided into two groups (8 subjects each). Experimental group received 8 sessions of interpersonal therapy

once a week. Therapy sessions should be held in the framework of eight 120-minute sessions.

A brief description of the sessions is as follows:

First Session: Performing pre-test; describing how the task should be carried out; introducing members to each other; introducing the group's rules

Second Session: Discussing the importance of infidelity and betrayal as an issue and its effects on the marital status; raising hope and encouraging the members, their acceptance and understanding to provide for an effective treatment.

Third Session: Providing a brief description of the researches carried out on the reasons behind men's infidelity in the marital relationship and women's role in men's commitment. How to talk about the incident that has happened?

Fourth Session: Learning how to forgive; definition of forgiveness; reviewing cases which are not considered examples of forgiveness

Fifth Session: Reviewing presumptions which block forgiveness; reviewing the pattern of procedures for forgiveness and pardon; reviewing the mental obstructions for forgiveness

Sixth Session: Why forgiveness is necessary? Teaching the 8 stages of forgiveness

Seventh Session: Teaching how to improve marital life based on the Honesty rule (showing feelings, whether positive or negative, informing the spouse of the daily routines and occurrences, honesty about the future)

Eighth Session: Teaching the principles of damage control, teaching how to regain confidence.

2.1. Tools

Questionnaire of the research on forgiving the infidelity of the spouse is designed based on Gutman's questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 25 questions and includes subscales such as measurement of negative feelings, the degree of forgiveness, and restoring confidence. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire in terms of form and content, we have asked some experts and professional advisors of family centers to express their views on the issue. The reliability of the questionnaire implemented in the study is estimate to be 71 percent based on Cronbach's Alpha. Due the sequential options, the model for grading the questionnaire is done based on Likert psychometric scale. It means each of the questions in the test had a 5-grade scale: totally agree, agree, no idea, disagree, totally disagree.

2.2. Statistical analysis

Table1: the results of percentage and frequency according to educational degree

Variable	Experimental group		Control group	
Educational degree	Percentage	frequency	percentage	frequency
Under Diploma	25	2	12.5	1
Diploma	50	4	50	4
Diploma&higher	12.5	1	25	2
M.A.	12.5	1	12.5	1
Total	100	8	100	8

Table2: descriptive indicator of research variable in two groups (pre-post test)

Variable		Experimental group				Control group			
		Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD
reducing negative feeling degree of forgiveness	Pretest	8	16	11.62	3.37	7	25	14.62	5.50
	post test	8	23	15.75	4.74	7	19	12.25	3.61
	pre test	22	35	28.37	4.40	14	45	28.62	8.68
	post test	30	36	33.12	2.1	13	36	24.62	7.68
restoring confidence	pre test	14	23	17.75	2.81	8	33	19.12	7.97
	post test	19	26	22.12	2.47	8	29	17.25	6.71

Table3: The results of Multivariate test for 3 variables (reducing negative feelings, the degree of forgiveness and restoring confidence)

Variable	test name	value	F	hypothesis df	Error df	sig
Reducing Negative feeling	Pillai 's trace	.505	1.35	3	4	.375
	Wilks's Lambda	.495	1.35	3	4	.375
	Hotllings'trace	1.01	1.35	3	4	.375
	Roys's largest root	1.01	1.35	3	4	.375
degree of forgiveness	Pillai 's trace	.625	2.21	3	4	.228
	Wilks's Lambda	.375	2.21	3	4	.228
	Hotllings'trace	1.66	2.21	3	4	.228
	Roys's largest root	1.66	2.21	3	4	.228
restoring confidence	Pillai 's trace	.410	.925	3	4	.506
	Wilks's Lambda	.590	.925	3	4	.506
	Hotllings'trace	.694	.925	3	4	.506
	Roy's Largest root	.694	.925	3	4	.506
-Reducing Negative feeling -degree of forgiveness -restoring confidence	Pillai 's trace	.938	1.47	6	10	.281
	Wilks's Lambda	.272	1.22	6	8	.385
	Hotllings'trace	1.90	.945	6	6	.522
	Roy's Largest root	1.32	2.20	3	5	.205

Table4: homogeneity of separate regression lines for each dependent variables

Dependent variable	SS	df	MS	F	sig
Reducing negative feeling	37.54	2	18.77	1.84	.237
Degree of forgiveness	25.76	2	12.88	.59	.580
Restoring confidence	34.25	2	17.12	.97	.431

Table 5: Results of MANCOVA on dependent variables in experimental and control group

Dependant	test name	value	F	hypothesis df	Error df	sig
Reducing negative feeling .03 .03 Roys's largest root	Pillai 's trace	.614	4.76	3	9	.03
	Wilks's Lambda	.386	4.76	3	9	.03
	Hotllings'trace	1.58	4.76	3	9	.03
	Roy's Largest root	1.58	4.76	3	9	.03

Table6: Results of ANCOVA on dependent variables in experimental and control groups

SS	df	MS	F	sig	Eta square	observed power	Dependent variable
Reducing negative feeling	116.69	1	116.69	10.14	.009	.480	1
Degree of forgiveness	290.92	1	290.92	15.36	.002	.583	1
Restoring confidence	143.45	1	143.45	9.15	.012	.454	1

2.3. Results

Descriptive statistics indices such as: Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and the Maximum were taken into concern.

Findings related to the research hypotheses testing: Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANOCVA) and Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The results were reported significant at the P value less than to equal to 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$). As shown in table 1, the max of educational degree in experimental group is diploma and the minimum of that is for advanced diploma and MA& advanced. And also the max of educational degree in control group is diploma and the minimum of that is for under diploma and MA& advanced. As indicated in table 2, the comparison of mean in experimental group (pre- post test) shows the effect of interval treatment. As shown in table 3 there is no difference between regression slopes of pre- post test of 3 dependent variables in experimental and control group. As it shown in Table 4 ($F = 1/84$ and $p \leq 0/237$) there exist significant differences between experimental and control group in Women Afflicted with Marital Infidelity with regard to their obtained scores in reducing negative feeling on pre-test and post test. As it is also indicated in Table 4 ($F = 0/59$ and $p \leq 0/580$); the experimental and control group significantly differed in Women Afflicted with Marital Infidelity with regard to their degree of forgiveness scores on pre test and post test. As it shown in Table 4 ($F = 0/97$ and $p \leq 431$) there exist significant differences between experimental and control group in Women Afflicted with Marital Infidelity with regard to their obtained scores in restoring confidence on pre-test and post test. As it shown in Table 5, it can be concluded that interval treatment can be effective at least on one of the dependent variables. The results of a covariance analysis on table 6 show, there is a meaningful difference between the two groups in reducing negative feelings ($p < 0/009$). Eta square shows that 0/48 of the changes are the result of the Interpersonal Therapy effects on experimental group. As it is also indicated in Table 6, there is a meaningful difference between the two groups in reducing Degree of forgiveness ($p < 0.002$). Eta square shows that 0/583 of the changes are the result of the Interpersonal Therapy effects on experimental group. As it is also indicated in Table 6, there is a meaningful difference between the two groups in reducing negative feelings ($p < 0.012$). Eta square shows that 0/454 of the changes are the result of the Interpersonal Therapy effects on experimental group.

3. Discussion

The current study is aimed at assessing the effects of treatment with an interpersonal approach on reducing negative feelings, increasing the degree of forgiveness, and restoring confidence to women afflicted with marital infidelity in the city of Tehran. According to the results of the multivariate analysis of covariance test $p < .01$ it could be concluded that treatment with interpersonal approach has

a positive effect in reducing negative feelings among women afflicted with marital infidelity (hypothesis 1-1). These findings are consistent with the results of Rye&etal,2001 and Gordon, 2002. Reducing negative feelings requires a fresh vision towards the problem. In this regard women managed to take advantage of the therapy session's safe atmosphere to review the issue and discover their own share in the illegitimate relationship marital problems before the incident ever took place and avoid other patterns such as slander, hatred, emotional dismissal of the spouse, which are the main factors to ruin the relationship.

Testing hypothesis 1-2 shows that according to results of the multivariate analysis of covariance test $p < .01$ there is meaningful difference. These findings are consistent with the results of Stefano& etal,2008; Teresa&etal,2003; Ripley&etal,2002. hence it could be concluded that treatment with interpersonal approach can affect the degree of forgiveness. Based on studies by Gordon, it could be concluded that the process of forgiveness takes shape in a very slow and continuous process during the marital relationship. During the therapy sessions, members of the group learned that psychological trauma do not fade away or heal thoroughly from human life, nor positive feelings replace them miraculously. As a result of forgiveness, positive feelings do not replace negative ones, but they opt for coexistence. Women, by taking inspirations from the group, came to the point that they pay a high price because of their rage and since the objective is to avoid such a high price, they chose to forgive and by gifting their kindness and compassion to their husbands, they were healed.

Based on testing hypotheses 1-3 and according to results of the multivariate analysis of covariance test $p < .01$ there is a meaningful difference, hence it could be concluded that treatment with interpersonal approach can affect restoring confidence to women. These findings are consistent with the results of Burchard&etal,2004; Davis&etal,2011; Gordon, 2002. To elaborate on this point, it could be pointed out that infidelity can take a toll on the most rudimental component for marital relationship, namely confidence.

During this process efforts were made to highlight the point for the group that living a life of infidelity and constant involvement with infidelity would make treatment more difficult and would make patient mentally ill and psychologically weak. During the group process, women learned that time (about two years) would take the edge off the memories which instigate their bad emotions. Therefore the afflicted woman should encourage her husband to take steps in restoring confidence and the unfaithful husband should also show commitment and loyalty through obvious changes in his behavior and should do his utmost to rebuild confidence. Therefore, the role of unfaithful husband and passage of time are two very important factors in the process of confidence restoration.

There are some restrictions in this study which prevents the results from being generalized.

Restrictions:

- 1-Absence of group members from some sessions, due to personal problem such as taking care of a young child or the husband's opposition, hinders generalization of the results to the given society.
- 2-Not implementing follow-up; the follow-up session could further prove the results of this study.
- 4-Absence of men (partners of damaged families)

Suggestions:

- 1-In this study, since men were not inclined to cooperate, the researcher was forced to hold the sessions for women afflicted with infidelity. In view of this point it is suggested that a new study be carried out to review the effects of treatment of couples on forgiving the spouse.
- 2-As children of families affected by infidelity witness many cases of conflicts and unrest and are victims of problematic side-effects of infidelity, some sessions to educate these families' children should be prioritized and the results be discussed.
- 3-Teaching treatment measure and strategies to families afflicted with marital infidelity aimed at improving personal health of the couples to prevent families from being torn apart.

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