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Research Article

The Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy on Negative Emotions and Social Isolation of Infertile Women in Yazd

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Abstract

Objectives: Fertility and the desire to have children are among the most fundamental human motivations. Infertility is one of the major challenges in developed countries, has become a growing social concern, and is associated with numerous psychosocial consequences for infertile couples. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of emotion-focused therapy on negative affect and social isolation among infertile women in Yazd.

Methods:The research method was quasi-experimental, using a pretest-posttest design with a control group. The statistical population included all infertile women introduced by the Population Working Group of the Cultural and Popular Front of Yazd City in 2022. In this study, 30 infertile women were selected through convenience sampling and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (15 participants in each group). The experimental group received emotion-focused therapy in 8 sessions, while the control group received no intervention. Both groups completed the Negative Affect and Social Isolation Questionnaires at the pretest and posttest stages. The data were analyzed at two levels: descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (analysis of covariance).

Results:. The results showed that, after controlling for the pretest effect, there was a significant difference between the posttest scores for negative affect and social isolation. Therefore, emotion-focused therapy reduced negative affect and social isolation among infertile women.

Conclusion: Given the effectiveness of this therapy, its application is recommended to specialists in this field.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Fertility and the desire to have children are among the most basic human motivations. The phenomenon of infertility is one of the important challenges in developed countries, has become an increasing social concern, and brings many psychosocial consequences for infertile couples. Infertility is a phenomenon recognized throughout the world and across all cultures as a critical, threatening, and stressful experience that can affect social, family, marital, and individual stability. The inability to control anxiety and stress in life and to properly manage frustration can lead to increased conflict between infertile couples and may ultimately lead to separation. Paying attention to the psychological needs of infertile women is an essential component of successful infertility treatment and reducing psychological stress. This study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of emotion-focused therapy on negative emotions and social isolation among infertile women in Yazd.

Method

This was a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest study with a control group. The research population consisted of all infertile women introduced by the Population Working Group of Yazd City. A total of 30 women were selected through convenience sampling and randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. Before any intervention, a pretest was administered to both groups. The experimental group then received emotion-focused therapy in 8 sessions. At the end of the intervention, a posttest was administered to both the experimental and control groups.

Results

The results of this study were analyzed at two levels: descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (analysis of covariance). The results of the covariance analysis showed that, after controlling for the pretest effect, there was a significant difference between the posttest scores for negative affect and social isolation. Therefore, emotion-focused therapy reduced negative emotions and social isolation among infertile women.

Discussion

According to the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that emotion-focused therapy can be used as an effective treatment method for reducing negative emotions and social isolation. This therapy views emotion as the central focus of psychological problems and considers it to be influential in personality traits, disorders, cognitive information processing, and interpersonal relationships. In this method, infertile women learn to accept and acknowledge their feelings and needs without censorship or negative evaluation. Instead of suppressing their feelings or becoming overwhelmed by them, they become aware of their emotional experiences and attempt to perceive them more deeply. Understanding and experiencing emotions helps individuals deal with negative feelings and difficult emotions in a more adaptive manner and achieve emotional balance.

Suppression of different types of emotions can be harmful, and after a period of time, suppressed emotions may be expressed explosively and uncontrollably. Appropriate expression of emotions can prevent many problems. Since emotions play an important role in life, the emotional regulation that occurs during the treatment process helps individuals

develop positive social interactions and take better care of themselves in stressful situations. In fact, by becoming aware of positive and negative emotions and understanding the impact of these emotions on relationships, individuals can better understand what contributes to the breakdown of their relationships. This, in turn, can reduce interpersonal and social conflicts, decrease social isolation, and increase interaction with others.

Timely acceptance and expression of emotions play an important role in improving mental health. Individuals organize and process their emotional experiences and strengthen the interaction patterns they have developed. In fact, by gradually identifying negative behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, the individual can reduce anxiety by influencing the physiological arousal associated with anxiety and negative cognitions.

At the end of treatment, individuals achieve outcomes such as greater awareness of emotions, expression of new emotions, improved coping with problems, and appropriate emotional expression. They also develop a new perception of themselves, allowing emotions to be identified and transformed into comprehensible and constructive self-affirming messages. These changes help individuals recognize themselves as capable of making choices and regulating their emotional experiences. Therefore, given the effectiveness of this therapy, the use of this treatment method is recommended to specialists in this field.)

Authors' Contribution: Based on the defined roles, the research design and writing of the initial draft of the article were carried out by Najmeh Kargarian Marvasti (first author). Data collection was also performed by her, while data analysis and research methodology were conducted by Mahdieh Azizi Bandarabadi (second author) and Parvaneh Mohammadkhani (third author), respectively. Review and final editing of the article were carried out with the participation of all authors, and all have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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