



Comparison impact functional analysis psychotherapy (FAP) and schema therapy on emotional experience towards spouse, communication patterns and rumination of couples referring to counseling centers in Isfahan city

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of the present study was to compare functional analysis psychotherapy (FAP) and schema therapy on emotional experience towards spouse, communication patterns and rumination of couples referring to counseling centers in Isfahan city. **Method:** The research method was semi-experimental and pre-test, post-test, and follow-up with two experimental and control groups. The statistical population includes all couples in the age group of 25 to 45 years old in Isfahan city, who were selected by available sampling method, 30 couples (10 couples in the first test group, 10 couples in the second test group, and 10 couples in the control group) And for the first group, the performance analysis therapy experiment was presented during 12 sessions, and for the second group, the schema therapy experiment was also presented during 8 sessions. Data collection tools included Brashaw's 6-question emotional experience questionnaire (2009), Christensen and Salawi's (1984) 35-question communication patterns questionnaire, Nolen-Hoeksma and Morrow's (2008) 22-question rumination questionnaire. To analyze the data, the statistical method of analysis of variance with repeated measurements was used. **Results:** The results showed that there is a difference between the effect of the two psychotherapy methods, performance analysis and schema therapy, on the emotional experience towards the spouse ($f=0.33$ and $p=0.71$) and couples' communication patterns ($f=0.004$ and $p=0.97$) There was no significant difference, but there was a significant difference between the two psychotherapy methods, performance analysis and schema therapy, on rumination ($f=4.40$ and $p=0.03$). **Conclusion:** Therefore, the schema therapy method in the treatment of rumination and reducing marital conflicts has been a more effective method than performance analysis psychotherapy. **Keywords:** Performance analysis psychotherapy, schema therapy, emotional experience towards spouse, communication patterns, rumination.

Introduction

The family is a social institution formed by the marital bond between a man and a woman. The health of marital life ensures the emotional and psychological well-being of its members, which in turn depends on the continuity of the relationship between the husband and wife. The marital relationship is the most intimate and private human relationship, whose duration and quality require emotional knowledge and skills (Wessler & Muller, 2020). Numerous studies have shown that overt and covert emotional and behavioral exchanges between couples are among the strongest predictors of marital quality and stability, and emotional experiences in marital life play a prominent role in the endurance or breakdown of marriage (Yamout, Assad, Tamin, Marbet & Gueider, 2020). One of the factors leading to destructive exchange behaviors is the dominance of negative emotions during conflict; indeed, the inability to regulate negative emotions in spousal relationships may cause individuals to experience such a high level of negative and distressing emotions that they engage in problematic behaviors such as withdrawal or verbal or physical violence to escape this painful experience (Stamps, 2020). When couples face intense negative emotions such as anger arising from disagreements or disappointment, they may resort to the most primitive methods; they might severely blame each other, engage in behaviors aimed at demeaning one another, or get caught in destructive exchanges such as demand-withdrawal patterns (Watkins & Roberts, 2020).

The second therapeutic method in this study is schema therapy. Schema therapy is an innovative and integrative treatment method founded by Young and his colleagues. It is a modern and integrated treatment mainly based on the expansion of concepts and methods of classic cognitive-behavioral therapy. According to Young, the goal of schema therapy is to help satisfy the patient's unmet emotional needs. When these emotional needs are somewhat met during the therapy process, it paves the way for improving schemas, as incompatible schemas are essentially created due to the unmet emotional needs (Tutio, Dier, Eli, Zou, Lorian & Johanston, 2015). According to Young's view in schema therapy, the treatment goal is for patients to use more adaptive coping styles instead of incompatible ones, thereby fulfilling their fundamental emotional needs. Schema therapy helps identify schemas and predominant mindsets through interviews and questionnaires, and by explaining the concept of schema, it assists the patient in making decisions and behaviors based on realities rather than schemas (Young, 2011). Emotional schema therapy reduces experimental avoidance and its components in couples with communicative styles (Entezari, Jahangir & Doukanai Fard, 2021). Schema therapy integrates the principles and foundations of cognitive-behavioral, attachment, Gestalt, object relations, constructivist, and psychoanalytic schools into a valuable conceptual and therapeutic model. This therapy provides a new system of psychotherapy, particularly suitable for patients with chronic and resistant disorders, which have been a complex issue in treatment so far.

Given the above, the question arises whether there is a difference between the impact of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) and schema therapy on the emotional experience towards a spouse, communication patterns between couples, and rumination among couples seeking counseling in Isfahan. This research aims to investigate the following questions:

1. Is there a difference between Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) and schema therapy on the emotional experience towards a spouse in couples seeking counseling?
2. Is there a difference between Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) and schema therapy on communication patterns between couples seeking counseling?
3. Is there a difference between Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) and schema therapy on rumination in couples seeking counseling?

Method

The research method was semi-experimental and pre-test, post-test, and follow-up with two experimental and control groups. The statistical population includes all couples in the age group of 25 to 45 years old in Isfahan city, who were selected by available sampling method, 30 couples (10 couples in the first test group, 10 couples in the second test group, and 10 couples in the control group) And for the first group, the performance analysis therapy experiment was presented during 12 sessions, and for the second group, the schema therapy experiment was also presented during 8 sessions. Data collection tools included Brashaw's 6-question emotional experience questionnaire (2009), Christensen and Salawi's (1984) 35-question communication patterns questionnaire, Nolen-Hoeksma and Morrow's (2008) 22-question rumination questionnaire. To analyze the data, the statistical method of analysis of variance with repeated measurements was used.

Results

The results showed that there is a difference between the effect of the two psychotherapy methods, performance analysis and schema therapy, on the emotional experience towards the spouse ($f=0.33$ and $p=0.71$) and couples' communication patterns ($f=0.004$ and $p=0.97$) There was no significant difference, but there was a significant difference between the two psychotherapy methods, performance analysis and schema therapy, on rumination ($f=4.40$ and $p=0.03$).

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to compare the impact of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) and Schema Therapy on the emotional experience towards the spouse, communication patterns, and rumination among couples seeking counseling in Isfahan. The discussion regarding the primary hypothesis of the study, comparing the effect of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy and Schema Therapy on the emotional experience towards the spouse, communication patterns, and rumination among couples seeking counseling in Isfahan, revealed that in two variables—emotional experience towards the spouse and communication patterns—the main effect of time and the interaction effect of time and group were not statistically significant. The non-significance of the time effect means that there is no significant difference in the variables of emotional experience towards the spouse and communication patterns of the couples at the three stages of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. However, rumination showed a statistically significant main effect of time and interaction effect of time and group. Also, the non-significance of the group and time effect means there is no difference between the two experimental and control groups in the three stages of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up in the variables of emotional experience towards the spouse and communication patterns. Therefore, it can be said that there was no significant difference between the impact of the two

psychotherapy methods of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy and Schema Therapy on the emotional experience towards the spouse and the communication patterns of the couples, but there was a significant difference in the impact on rumination.

Among the limitations of the current study was that the results were limited to couples with marital conflicts in Isfahan, and caution must be exercised in generalizing the results to other couples with marital conflicts in other cities. Another limitation was coordinating the participation of couples in the two experimental groups in therapy sessions. Since it was not possible to control all intervening variables such as economic status in this study, the generalization of results should be done cautiously.

In line with practical recommendations, considering the research results on "the effectiveness of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy and Schema Therapy on the emotional experience towards the spouse, communication patterns, and rumination," it is suggested that the Crisis Intervention Center of the Welfare Organization use both Functional Analytic Psychotherapy and Schema Therapy methods to resolve marital conflicts of couples. Given the findings on "the effectiveness of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy on communication patterns," it is recommended that workshops on Functional Analytic Psychotherapy be held for couples facing difficulties in establishing healthy and effective communication. Considering the research findings on "the effectiveness of Functional Analytic Psychotherapy and Schema Therapy on the emotional experience towards the spouse, communication patterns, and rumination," it is suggested that educational classes on Schema Therapy based on skills for identifying and diagnosing cognitive errors be held to improve inefficient attitudes and increase the forgiveness skills of couples, thereby preventing their rumination and enhancing their forgiveness skills.

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