



The Effect of Cognitive-Semantic Counseling on Agreeableness of Paranoid Patient Couples in Isfahan

Original Article

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of cognitive-semantic counselling on agreeableness of paranoid patients' spouses. The research procedure was semi experimental with pre-test and post-test design with control group. Sample was collected from the spouses of paranoid patients referred to psychiatry hospital. Sample consisted of 18 people who had been selected through randomized convenient method and were distributed in experimental and control groups. The measurement tool was marital agreeableness questionnaire set by the researcher. After doing pre-test for all subjects, the experimental group attended 8 sessions (1 session a week) of cognitive- semantic group counselling. After the counselling sessions, all subjects in two groups took a post-test and the data were analysed by co-variance analysis. Results showed that cognitive semantic counselling had improved marital agreeableness of subjects ($P < 0.05$), and it had affected the aspects of agreeableness including trust ($P < 0.01$) and straightforwardness ($P < 0.01$).

Keywords: Marital Agreeableness, Paranoia Disorder, Cognitive-Semantic Counselling

INTRODUCTION

Agreeableness is one of the factors from the big five theory and one of the mostly discussed aspects of personality in conflict studies and so is one of the personality characters involved in improving married life quality.

Agreeableness is known as a powerful motivator to maintain positive relationships and as the concern for other's comfort. Therefore, agreeable individuals probably avoid conflict, forgive the guilty and when involved in conflicts comply other's demands [1, 2].

Different studies have analyzed this aspect of personality in relationships and marriage. Less agreeable individuals tend to have antisocial thoughts, emotions, and practices whereas agreeable individuals accord with social thoughts, emotions, and practices [3]. On the other hand, personality traits affect the interaction of couples. Researchers believe that personality helps define the interpersonal matters affecting marital interactions [4, 5]. Also, personality influences psychological foundation of a persistent relationship and so is the key to predict success or failure of a relationship [3]. All these resources suggest that marital interaction patterns take effect from couples' personalities [6]. In another study, couples reported that an overall satisfaction is in accordance with agreeableness and openness to experience. Agreeableness may be an important predictive factor for marital performance because there is evidence that this aspect of personality has an important impact on interpersonal relations [7]. Such studies show that more agreeable individuals are more capable of controlling their emotions during interpersonal relationships which in turn facilitates balanced interpersonal confrontation. Generally, agreeable spouses may be well prepared to control the conflicts in their marriage and therefore reduce the number or extent of negative interactions. Yet few studies relate agreeableness to observable or evaluable marital intercoms. In a meta-analytic research, only three studies reported a relation between agreeableness and marital satisfaction (with effect size of 0.5 for women and 0.3 for men) [4]. According to another study, most persistent prediction of marital dissatisfaction is emotional inconstancy of the spouse, also, low task orientation, little agreeableness, and little openness/wisdom. A partner with mentioned characteristics imposes the other partner to high expenses [4, 8]. Forgiveness is one of the factors of agreeableness and a personality trait of agreeable individuals, studies show that it positively correlates with all scales of personality especially in five factor theory of personality [8]. Experimental studies show that the problems and conflicts in the life of several couples result from suspicion and lack of trust between the individuals. Meanwhile, one of the significant consequences of this problem is the reduction of agreement between couples. Therefore, it is important to consider this fact in evaluating their relationship. Suspicion and

mistrust are the key characteristics of paranoia i.e. having wrong attitudes and beliefs about others. When used as discussed, paranoia includes unusual beliefs about grandiosity, love and jealousy.

It seems that, according to the problems of the couples one of whom presents with paranoid symptoms and look forward to continuing the relationship at the same time, increasing the amount of agreeableness can be effective on decreasing their marriage problems. The question at this point is how to increase agreeableness in partners of paranoid patients?

Although there are different ways to increase agreeableness, it seems that a mixed approach relying on positive personality traits together with spirituality can be more effective. Experience shows that a unique psychotherapy approach is not responsive in treating all patients with all variable disorders.

Among schools of psychology, humanism specially Frankl's logo therapy theory has discussed spiritual subjects in decreasing psychological and interpersonal pressures and problems more than other theories and this relation has been confirmed in other studies. On the other hand, it seems that using cognitive-semantic techniques and skills are effective on achieving the mentioned goal.

Therefore, according to studies, it seems that consultation in order to increase marital agreement can influence the quality of relationship and decrease marital conflicts. Furthermore, because of the extent of marital conflicts in the target group i.e. couples with at least one paranoid partner, this study analyses the effect of cognitive- semantic consultation on the agreeableness of the partners of the paranoid individuals.

The hypothesis discussed in this study are as below:

-1- Group cognitive-semantic counseling is effective on agreeableness of the partners of paranoid patients.

2- Group cognitive-semantic counseling affects the aspects of marital agreement (trust, simplicity, accompaniment, modesty and compassion).

MATEREALS AND METHODS

This study is experimental and two groups of experimental and control were studied using pre-test and post-test. Samples were collected using convenience randomized sampling method and were randomly put into two groups of experimental and control. Both groups were evaluated before the implementation of the therapeutic method. Afterward, the dependent variable i.e. the cognitive-semantic counseling, was presented for the experimental group during 8 sessions. At the end of the presentation, both experimental and control groups were evaluated in a post- test and the results were analyzed.

The statistical population of this research includes the partners of the referred patients to the psychiatric ward of 'Khorshid hospital' who had at least one of the diagnosis of paranoid disorder and paranoid delusional disorder- jealous type- in Isfahan. Sample consisted of 18 individuals collected from the spouses of the paranoid patients admitted in Khorshid hospital using convenience randomized sampling method who were then divided into two groups of experiment(9 people) and control(9 people).

Tool of this research were made by the researcher using the big five factor personality theory to prepare the questionnaire. 48 questions were asked according to the sub scales of agreeableness i.e. trust, simplicity, altruism, accompaniment, modesty, and compassion in marital relationships. Answering the questions were based on Likert's scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

After preparing the questions the primary form of the questionnaire was provided in order to be revised by five experts in family counseling. Having revised some questions, the questionnaire was confirmed by all the experts and its validity and reliability was confirmed. Afterwards, the questionnaire was presented to 38 married residents of Isfahan .

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha 0.72 method. Since the validity coefficient of this aspect in the five factor theory is lower than the other aspects in other studies- e.g. 66% in Farahani study, 55% in Amani's study- the calculated alpha variable in this study is quite acceptable. To verify the questions, the consistency of each question was computed with the test overall score. Therefore, 6 questions were omitted from 48 questions. From the rest 46

Questions, the score of 22 questions with $P=0.01$ and 20 questions with $P= 0.05$ had a significant correlation with the overall score. The consistency variable was again calculated for 42 questions and the consistency variable 0.78 was achieved.

As discussed before, the questionnaire consists of 6 domains. The first domain (trust) included 8 questions, the second domain (simplicity) 6 questions, the third domain (altruism) 8 questions, the fourth

(Accompaniment) 7 questions, the fifth (modesty) 6 questions, and the sixth domain (compassion) included 7 questions. The individual's score was calculated by summing up the scores. The choices 2, 4, 5,7,9,13,15,16,18, 20, 23, 21, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41 are scored reversely .

The lows score in this test was zero and the highest score was 168 and higher individual's score indicated higher level of agreeableness in marital relationships.

Implementation of the study: After collecting the sample and dividing it into two groups of experiment and control, the marital agreeableness test was conducted as pre-test and cognitive- semantic counseling sessions were held for the experimental group. No training session was held for the control group. At the end of the sessions, marital agreeableness test was presented to both groups as the post-test. There were 8 sessions of cognitive – semantic counseling which were held once a week and each session lasted for 2 hours.

The contents of the counseling sessions were as follow:

Introducing the members to each other, defining the problem and the common goal, introducing paranoid disorder and its symptoms and types, presenting treating model, analyzing the assumptions and the essential beliefs of the members, concentrating the members on their role in forming problems, presenting the concept of semantic and its importance, presenting and defining the three sources of semantic, correcting and rebuilding the cognition system(describing the relation between thoughts and emotions, explaining the automatic negative thoughts and describing the nuclear beliefs) , teaching soliloquy skill, teaching making predication skill, teaching the skill of making expectations, teaching problem solving skills, teaching attention distraction skill, special paranoid communicative skills, caring skills to perform job or completing a task, and presenting concepts of attitude.

RESULTS

In order to test the hypotheses, the analyzing covariance test was used. The descriptive and inferential results will be presented.

First hypothesis: Group cognitive-semantic counseling is effective on agreeableness of the partners of paranoid patients.

The descriptive statistics of this hypothesis are presented in Table 1. In order to determine the effect of the independent variable on the experimental group and controlling the effect of pre-test, covariance analyzing test was used since one of the defaults of covariance analysis, is the equality of the variances of the two groups. To determine the equality of the variances, Levine's test was used. The results of both tests are demonstrated in table 2.

Table1. Average and standard deviation of the scores of the marital agreeableness in pre-test and post-test

variable	group	Test type	average	Standard deviation	number
Marital agreeableness	Experiment	Pre-test	104.18	21.46	9
		Post-test	117.11	10.74	9
	control	Pre-test	117	14.84	9
		Post-test	117	15.50	9

Table2. Levine's test and covariance analysis, comparison of post-test scores of the control and experimental group.

variable index	Levine's F	Significance level	Mean square	F	Significance level	Eta coefficient	Statistical power
group	0.40	0.84	233.98	4.71	0.046	0.23	0.52

As appears in table.2, the difference between the experimental and control group is significant ($P=0.046$). That is, the difference between the marital agreeableness average of the experimental group (179.011) and that of the control (117.000) obtained from table.1 are significant.

As a result, group cognitive-semantic counseling is effective on marital agreeableness of the spouses of paranoid patients at the $P<0.05$ level. Therefore the first hypothesis of this research i.e. the effectiveness of group cognitive-semantic counseling on agreeableness of paranoid patients' spouses, is confirmed. Also, results show that pre-test has had significant effect on post-test, which is certainly controlled in this study.

Second hypothesis: Group cognitive-semantic counseling affects the aspects of marital agreement (trust, simplicity, accompaniment, modesty and compassion).

Average and standard deviation of each aspect of agreeableness in pre-test and post-test are shown in table3. According to the results, the average marital agreeableness scores of experimental group in aspects of trust ($P=0.01$) and forthrightness and simplicity ($P=0.000$), are significantly more than that of those of the control group. The average difference between the two groups, in altruism, accompaniment, modesty, and compassion was not significant. In other words, cognitive-semantic counseling was only effective on trust and forthrightness aspects of agreeableness.

Table3. Average and standard deviation of marital agreeableness aspects in pre-test and post-test

variable	Group	Test type	Average	Standard deviation	Number
Trust	Experiment	Pre-test	15.88	6.37	9
		Post-test	18.77	5.09	9
	control	Pre-test	18.33	6.32	9
		Post-test	18.33	6.63	9
Forthrightness and simplicity	Experiment	Pre-test	14.55	3.00	9
		Post-test	18.16	2.08	9
	control	Pre-test	17.00	2.69	9
		Post-test	16.77	2.04	9
Altruism	Experiment	Pre-test	21.33	1.73	9
		Post-test	23.22	2.72	9
	control	Pre-test	24.00	2.95	9
		Post-test	23.66	3.20	9
		Pre-test	18.44	6.85	9

Accompaniment	Experiment	Post-test	20.88	4.45	9
	control	Pre-test	21.00	3.67	9
		Post-test	21.22	3.83	9
Modesty	Experiment	Pre-test	13.33	4.47	9
		Post-test	14.88	2.97	9
	control	Pre-test	14.00	3.00	9
		Post-test	13.77	2.94	9
Compassion	Experiment	Pre-test	21.44	5.72	9
		Post-test	22.88	3.40	9
	control	Pre-test	23.33	4.30	9
		Post-test	23.22	4.40	9

Table4. Levine's test and covariance analysis, comparison of pre-test scores of experimental and control group in subscales

Agreeableness aspects	Levine's F	Significance level	Mean square	F	Significance level	Eta coefficient	Statistical power
Trust	1.39	0.25	32.95	8.56	0.01	0.36	0.78
Simplicity	0.37	0.55	11.73	21.39	0.000	0.58	0.99
Altruism	2.66	0.122	9.29	1.68	0.21	0.10	0.22
Accompaniment	0.75	0.39	7.05	1.30	0.27	0.08	0.18
Modesty	1.88	0.18	10.66	3.83	0.06	0.20	0.44
compassion	1.01	0.32	3.91	0.99	0.33	0.06	0.15

DISCUSSION

Results of the study indicated that cognitive-semantic counseling was effective on agreeableness of the spouses of paranoid patients and the most significant effect among all aspects of agreeableness belonged to trust and simplicity.

This result was in accordance with previous studies which had analyzed agreeableness in marital relationships [9, 10, 11, 4, 6, 7] in such a way that agreeableness was effective on increasing positive relationship factors or decreasing negative factors.

Study on married people showed that agreeableness was associated with avoiding persistent resentment and with tendency to forgive [12].

In another study, it appeared that cognitive and behavioral control abilities are in accordance with agreeableness which may be helpful in moderating the anger-aggression relation [13]. Another study showed that forgiveness was positively related to all scales of personality especially with agreeableness in the five factor personality theory [5]. Another study showed that neuroticism and disagreeableness are important factors of paranoid tendency [8]. Also In the study, the spouses reported that marital satisfaction is generally in a positive relation with the partner's report of agreeableness and openness to experience [14]. In another study, it was reported that more agreeable individuals respond to interpersonal conflicts more efficiently, cooperate in group tasks, and are described by their partners as socially sufficient [8]. A longitudinal study showed that most factors of marital dissatisfaction included low level of agreeableness and low level of task orientation and openness-wisdom [4].

It can be said about the probable reasons of the effects of cognitive-semantic counseling on increasing marital agreeableness that the studied people have an agreeable spirit as a result of their special married life conditions and also tend to be able to accept the concepts of humanism. In addition to the fact that living with sick spouses has made them somewhat agreeable, they are still ready to accept approaches based on humanism concepts. On the other hand, because of the inflexible personality of their spouses, it did not exceed certain limits.

On the other hand, it can be said about the second hypothesis that cognitive-semantic counseling have had a significant effect on paranoid spouses. Therefore, with emphasizing on the positive aspects of mankind and endeavor to establish and maintain a sense of purpose in life and increasing confidence in human nature and using cognitive-semantic techniques and empowering forthrightness in relationships, one can increase peace and life satisfaction.

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