

Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of self-encouragement training in mental health of Tehran women with addicted husbands. **Method:** A quasi-experimental method along with pre-test/post-test and control group was used for this study. The sample consisted of 20 women with drug-dependent spouses (in Pak Andishan Rehab Clinic of Tehran) who were selected on a voluntary basis and, then, were randomly assigned to two 10-person experimental and control groups. The experimental group participated in 10 self-encouragement training sessions and, then, both groups were assessed by general health questionnaire. **Results:** The results of this study showed that training sessions had a significant impact on mental health. **Conclusion:** Self-encouragement training sessions can result in an increase in mental health.

Keywords: Self-Encouragement, Mental Health, Women with Addicted Spouses

The Effectiveness of Self-Encouragement Training in Mental Health of Women with Addicted Spouses

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Introduction

Addiction is one of the factors that leads to destruction of the family foundation and occasions family disputes and conflicts. The situation becomes more pathogenic when the wives of addicts become informed of their husbands' addiction. In such circumstances, addicts' spouses lose their life expectancy, their mental health is affected by disturbances, their social relationships are impaired, and grief, sadness, loneliness, shame, and psychological insecurity will prevail over their lives (Halford, 2001, cited in Tarkhan, 2011). Ofarel (1995) found that addicted men's wives experience sad situations about selves, their life, and the future of their families. Their anxiety is the outcome of their preoccupation with the futility disintegration of life. They are anxious and depressed due to the pressure of household chores, economic problems resulting from their husbands' unemployment, life monotony, and unfriendly relationship with their husbands (cited in Mahboobimanesh, 2003). Larousse's Psychology Dictionary defines mental health as flexibility, the ability to keep balance, and mental aptitude for organization, happiness, and effective practice in difficult situations (Hossaini, 2008). Adler regards a person enjoying mental health as having the strength and courage to achieve his/her goals and accepting his/her own weak areas and problems and trying to tackle them (Stein & Edwards, 2008, cited in Salimi, Shaifi Abadi & Etemadi, 2012). When family-based educational intervention is used, the addicted individual's recovery accelerates, normal behaviors increase, and family functioning is improved (Liddle, Dakof, Parker, Diamond, Barrett & Tejada, 2001). Schoenaker's self-encouragement training is one of the family training programs that has been based on individual psychology and is planned to provide the conditions for excitement, encouragement, hopefulness, and motivation (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001). Adler, the founder of individual psychology, suggests four main needs, including the need to value, sense of capability, sense of belonging, and need for encouragement. Encouragement is a process that focuses on personal resources and the potential to increase self-esteem and self-acceptance. This encouragement is extremely correlated with an optimistic philosophy on life (Carlson, Watts & Maniaci, 2006). Encouragement is what makes a person own a sense of belonging and feel satisfied with his/her dedication to the welfare of society. Encouragement is employed to inspire morale, foster hope, incite a sense of motivation, support or instill gradual courage and confidence. Encouragement is a necessary component that helps to overcome the situations filled with distress which inevitably arise in the complexities of modern life (Dreikurs & Fergusson, 2006). When considering the psychological aspects of encouragement, it refers to the process of strengthening an individual's psychological power. From the pragmatic point of view, encouragement is an attitude that can be used to strengthen trust, success, and support (Yang, Milliren & Blagen, 2010). Encouragement is not only a phenomenon that is simply

achieved by individuals, but the individuals can be encouraged as well. As the encouragement of others is important, self-encouragement is also of special importance. Self-encouragement includes learning how to energize the self towards improvement and perfection and also self-valuing efforts. It also refers to belief in one's ability and understanding of the fact that self-faith and self-confidence are the sources of change and can foster self-esteem (Maybell & Maybell, 2004, cited in Alizadeh & Fathi, 2012). It also fosters hope, confidence, health, and satisfaction in others (Eckstein & Cooke, 2005). Self-encouragement entails both personal and social goals. The important point is to hold positive views towards the surrounding issues. However, many people do not hold such views and lead an inadequate and inferior life (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001). Encouragement is strongly correlated with the optimistic philosophy of life, but discouragement that is often synonymous with pessimism, is based on the lack of belief in one's ability to find solutions and create positive action (Eckstein & Cooke, 2005). Discouragement may be regarded as a family problem that troubles people. Discouragement often arises from erroneous beliefs and wrong thinking that emanate from primary childhood experiences (Milliren, Yang, Wingett & Boender, 2008). Adlerians do not seek treatment; rather, they view treatment as a process of encouragement (Watts & Garza, 2008). Thus, discouragement should be eliminated in order to increase courage, mental health, and satisfaction and to meet life needs. One of the treatment methods in dealing with these people is Schoenaker's self-encouragement training (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001). The more people become encouraged, the more they will experience a sense of belonging and the more they will benefit from inner tolerance against life challenges (Evans, 2005). Encouragement does not only refer to verbal responses, but it can also be regarded as a silent, receptive and sensitive mode or method (Eckstein, Belongia & Elliott- Applegate, 2000). Encouragement simply refers to risk-taking tendency and desire to tolerate hardships (Yang et al., 2010). As per Adlerians, encouragement plays an important role in reducing negativism and conflicts among family members, making progress in normally social behavior, and overcoming irrational thinking models (Carns & Carns, 1998). Bahlmann & Dinter (2001) concluded that individuals are reported to be more courageous and tolerant than ever after participating in Schoenaker's self-encouragement training program. Adlerian therapy is a psycho-educational short-term present-future-oriented therapeutic approach. This therapy obviously integrates cognitive and systemic perceptions although it is theoretically consistent, integrated and eclectic (Corey, 2013). In addition, Adlerian psychological features and assumptions are consistent with the cultural values of many ethnic groups and are dedicated to the use of diverse populations (Watts & Piterzak, 2000). Encouragement along with social interest in people leads to psychological hardiness. Psychological hardiness reduces stress and allows one to act appropriately and deals with the challenges of life in a way that meaning and purpose in life are produced (Kobasa, 1979; cited in

Nasiri Fard, 2009). Alizadeh, Nasiri Fard & Karimi (2010) reached the conclusion that encouragement training can increase self-efficacy and self-esteem in adolescent girls. Abolqasemi, Fallahi, Babai & Hojat (2012) showed that self-encouragement training increases self-efficacy among addicted men's wives while it has made no changes in marital satisfaction. Alimohammadi, Sohrabi & Karami (2011) also showed that encouragement training in groups significantly reduces symptoms of depression. It is possible to provide the addicted men's wives with correct communication patterns by training interventions so that the incidence of negative behaviors and communications can be prevented. Alizadeh & Fathi (2012) administered Schoenaker's self-encouragement training to the parents with children suffering mental retardation educationally and came to the conclusion that the parents' marital satisfaction, mental health, anxiety problems, sleep problems, social functions, and physical symptoms were improved; however, no improvement was observed in depressive symptoms. Therefore, the present study is mainly focused on the issue to know whether self-encouragement training can improve the mental health of addicted men's wives.

Method

Population, sample, and sampling method

In this study, a quasi-experimental research along with pretest-posttest and control group design was used. The statistical population of the study included all the women who accompanied their addicted husbands to the addiction treatment centers in Tehran to receive treatment services (methadone and buprenorphine) in 2013. For this purpose, those who volunteered to participate in the training course were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups. Therefore, the sample size of 20 participants was selected on a voluntary basis and was randomly divided into two 10-participant groups. The experimental group was treated with self-encouragement training sessions based on the topics and goals of Schoenaker's encouraging training sessions (1980). This training program consisted of ten 90-minute sessions (one session per week) while the control group received no training. The criteria for inclusion in the sample were: minimum education of middle school, at least one year of marriage, and a minimum age of 20 years. Exclusion criteria were: absence of more than two sessions, dissatisfaction, and not receiving information necessary for changes up to the fifth session, inactivity and no cooperation in doing homework assignments of the sessions. The contents of self-encouragement training sessions are presented in the following table.

Table 1: The content of self-encouragement training sessions

<i>Session</i>	<i>Content</i>
First session	Introducing the concept of encouragement and teaching encouraging behaviors and characteristics
Second session	Goal-oriented training of human behavior
Third session	Teaching encouragement, acceptance of mistakes, and the courage to admit incompleteness
Fourth session	Learning affectionate thinking and encouragement
Fifth session	Expressing the effect of slander behind people's back and gossiping on people's relationships with each other
Sixth session	The methods to build positive relationships
Seventh session	This session was planned on the basis of the sixth session and goes on by encouraging talks
Eighth session	Examining the role of self in difficult situations
Ninth session	Examining one's idea of love and a sense of belonging to others
Tenth session	Overall assessment of previous meetings

Instrument

General Health Questionnaire: This scale was designed by Goldberg & Hillier in 1979. This questionnaire consists of 28 questions, which constitute four factors, namely somatic symptoms (items numbered 1 to 7), anxiety and insomnia (items numbered 8 to 14), social dysfunction (items numbered 15 to 21), and severe depression (items numbered 22 to 28). This scale is scored based on a 4-point Likert scale and each item is rated from zero to three. Cheung & Spear reported the test-retest reliability of the scale equal to .47. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was obtained equal to .88 for the total scale and this value equaled .66, .72, .79, and .85 for the subscales of somatic symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction and depression, respectively. Researchers have confirmed the reliability of the scale several times and Goldberg & Hillier also reported its reliability equal to .89 (cited in Noorbala, Bagher Yazdi & Mohamad, 2008).

Results

The descriptive statistics of mental health are presented in the following table for each group and test.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of mental health for each group and test

<i>Group</i>	<i>Pretest</i>		<i>Posttest</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental	41.20	9.31	19.60	5.52
Control	39.90	6.15	36.90	5.85

Analysis of covariance test should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of self-encouragement training. One of the assumptions of using this analysis is the normal distribution of scores. In this regard, the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test are provided in the table 3.

Table 3: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results representing the normal distribution of the scores

<i>Status</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Test type</i>	<i>Group</i>
Normal	.85	.61	Pretest	Experimental
Normal	.88	.59	Posttest	
Normal	.99	.43	Pretest	Control
Normal	.98	.46	Posttest	

In addition, another assumption of using this test is the equality of variances which is examined by Levene's test. The results of Levene's test indicate that this assumption has been met ($F=.29$, $P>.05$). The results of the following table also suggest the homogeneity of the regression slope.

Table 4: Results of equity analysis of variance for regression slope

<i>Sources of change</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Group	182.25	43.16	.007
Pretest	40.59	9.61	.044
Group*Pretest	2.25	.533	.518

The results of analysis of covariance are presented in the following table.

Table 5: Results of analysis of covariance representing the effectiveness of the interventions in mental health

<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Effect size</i>
1623.71	161.880	.0005	.90

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to determine the effect of self-encouragement training on the mental health of addicted men's wives in Tehran. The results showed that encouraging training is effective in the promotion of mental health. In fact, mental health scores of the experimental group after receiving encouragement training were significantly different from the scores of this group in pretest. The results of this study suggest that self-encouragement training, with its emphasis on acceptance, especially self-acceptance, made the participants in the experimental group accept themselves more than ever and value their activities in life. Another important issue was the acceptance of others which had a strong influence on these individuals. In fact, they accepted their wives. Sharing the problems of life in group with people of similar interests, getting help from each other in the process of coping with life's problems, and receiving encouragement from each other reduced sad and depressive states and also anxiety. In line with the results of this study, Copello, Templeton & Powell (2010), Orford, Velleman, Copello, Templeton & Ibanga (2010), and Liddle, et al. (2001) showed that addiction exerts harmful effects and imposes a heavy price on families; for this reason, some interventions should also be done in such families for addiction treatment. In terms of the effectiveness of encouragement in self-efficacy, the results of this study are also consistent with those of the studies

done by Abolqasemi et al (2012) and Alizadeh et al. (2010), Alizadeh & Fathi (2012), and Bahlmann & Dinter (2001). In the dimension of depression, the current findings are in the same line with the results of other studies (Alimohammadi et al. 2011 and Eslami, 2013). Mohammadkhani, Asgari, Foroozan, Momeni & Delavar (2010) found that scores of women with addicted spouses in all psychiatric symptoms were significantly higher than their counterparts' scores. To interpret these results, one can assert that addiction imposes heavy costs on families and, thereby, some interventions should be carried out for addiction treatment in families of such people. When family therapy, group therapy, and family-based training interventions are used, the addict's recovery accelerates, normal behaviors increase, and family functioning is improved. Thus, encouragement helps people encounter problems and difficulties more actively and show friendly behaviors. Decrease of stress in social situations and improvement of social skills are among the other results of encouragement. Influenced by encouragement training, individuals behave friendlier towards selves and others, act more audaciously, foster higher tolerance and happiness, and develop higher levels of self-confidence. In addition, encouragement brings insightful views to life, sense of tenacity and robustness, leniency in situations, being more open than others, and lower inclination to seek perfection (Bahlmann & Dinter, 2001). Encouragement is used to inspire the spirit, foster hope, incite and provoke different senses such as support, and gradually instill courage and confidence. Encouragement is essential to overcome situations of distress which necessarily appear in the intricacies of life (Dreikurs Ferguson, 2006). In general, self-efficacy refers to such beliefs as "I can" or "I cannot" (Siegle & McCoach, 2007). This can be a reference to the definition of mental health that includes personal adequacy, self-control, self-accountability, self-actualization, and self-empowerment that are emphasized in encouragement training (the first principle, i.e., self-acceptance). Eslami (2013) showed that training classroom management techniques based on Adler-Dreikurs approach could significantly improve self-efficacy and mental well-being in teachers; this finding is consistent with those of the present study. Relatively accurate, balanced, and realistic understanding of the self can positively affect mental health criteria, such as the ability to take care of others, the ability to feel satisfied, the capacity to control important events in life, ability to do creative jobs, self-confidence, and optimism about the future (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Self-encouragement training aims to get a real understanding of self, as well. This reality lies in encouragement that although there are positive and negative emotions in the world, this is one's perception of these emotions that shapes his/her approach to life (Eckstein & Cooke, 2005). One of the limitations of this study was the difficulty in obtaining the consent of addicted individuals' wives to attend self-encouragement training sessions, which limited the sample size of the experimental group. Researchers interested in this area are recommended to conduct this training program on all members of the families

with one addicted member and measure the effect of this program on other family members (parents, siblings, children) and other components (parent-child relationships, depression, social acceptance, and other personality traits). In addition, self-encouragement training program is preventive in essence; therefore, it is a good idea to administer it to the parents in schools. This program can be fully taught to parents from the beginning of their children's primary school.

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