



Research Paper: Comparing the Effectiveness of Bowen Systematic and Solution-Focused Counseling on Reducing the Divorce Risk, Burnout and Marital Discord among Discordant Females



Arezoo Mojarrad^{1*}, Hosein Ghamarigivi², Ahmadreza Kiani³

¹ Ph.D. Candidate in General Psychology, Department of Counseling, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran

² Professor, Department of Counseling, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran

³ Associate Professor, Department of Counseling, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran

Citation: Mojarrad, A., Ghamarigivi, H., Kiani, A. (2021). Comparing the Effectiveness of Bowen Systematic and Solution-Focused Counseling on Reducing the Divorce Risk, Burnout and Marital Discord among Discordant Females. *Journal of Modern Psychology*, 1(4), 66-81. <https://doi.org/10.22034/JMP.2022.330457.1028>

 <https://doi.org/10.22034/JMP.2022.330457.1028>

Article info:

Received date:

19 Jul. 2021

Accepted date:

06 Sep. 2021

Keywords:

Bowen systematic counseling, Divorce risk, Marital burnout, Solution-focused counseling

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study discordant females regarding the comparison of the effectiveness of Bowen systematic and solution-focused counseling on reducing the risk of divorce, burnout and marital discord. The research design is quasi-experimental employing multiple groups pretest-posttest. The participants consisted of all women attending in Justice Department of Ardabil for divorce in 2016. The participants included 45 discordant women (divorce applicants) who were selected through convenience sampling method and were assigned to three groups (two experimental groups and one control group). The marital burnout questionnaire, marital instability index (MII), and Beier-Sternberg discord questionnaire (DQ) were used for data collection. Bowen systematic counseling and solution-focused counseling were provided for experimental groups in 7 sessions of an hour and a half each. Whereas, the control group did not receive any intervention. The results of the analysis of variance and Duncan's post hoc test showed that solution-focused counseling was more effective than Bowen systematic method in reducing divorce risk, burnout, and marital discord ($p < 0.05$). These results can be a strong for applying the priority of solution-focused counseling method to reduce the risk of divorce, burnout and marital discord among discordant women, thereby preventing family breakdown; this method can also be used to prevent marital conflicts.

*** Corresponding author:**

Arezoo Mojarradi

Address: Department of Counseling, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran

Tel: +98 (914) 708 4261

E-mail: arezoojarrad@yahoo.com



© 2021, The Author(s). Published by Rahman Institute of Higher Education. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

1. Introduction

Family is an entity that offers its members a feeling of security and serenity. Marital life is based on a contract between man and woman to meet their needs and, consequently, accomplish all its functions including the spirit of cooperation, division of works, children's education as well as nature, and creating kindness and affection (Campbell, 2013). The entity of family has experienced various developments throughout the history and has seen different changes. One of the damages facing modern-day families is the breaking down and causing disorder in the family in the form of divorce; whereas, various studies show that the growing rate of divorce is a global problem (Gonzalez et al., 2009). In Iran, this growing divorce rate, particularly since 1996, has also attracted the attention of researchers and policymakers toward this social phenomenon increasingly. A phenomenon that according to researchers, will have many effects and consequences in an individual and social levels and will bring about many other disorders in the society (Sadeghi Fasaee & Isari, 2015). Results from studies conducted in recent years revealed that about 78 percent of the problems young couples are facing derive from their relationship issues (Blumer & Murphy, 2011). Previous research has identified two acts of distress and tension in marital relationships as explicit marital conflicts or disagreement, discouragement, indifference or in other word *burnout* (Herrington et al., 2008). Kayser (1996 as cited in Lievaart et al., 2017) defined marital burnout as the gradual loss of emotional attachment, which includes reduced care about the spouse, emotional alienation, and increased sense of discouragement and indifference toward

the spouse, which includes three stages of frustration and disappointment, anger and hatred, and discouragement and indifference. People differ when they react to stimulating and conflicting situations (Lievaart et al., 2017).

Burnout in couples is a slow process, during which intimacy and love are gradually faded accompanied by a general sense of tiredness. By definition, burnout is a state of tiredness and physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulted from long-term conflicts in situations where people have many emotional and romantic demands. Such situations are usually appeared due to a great difference between expectations and reality, and the most important expectation is to find something that gives meaning to their life (Pines, 2003, 2004). Physical exhaustion or fatigue from burnout appears as chronic tiredness that does not recover with rest. Regarding the emotional exhaustion, people who suffer from burnout are always immersed in the thought that they have been emotionally perished and are constantly feeling resented and despondent toward themselves. The mental exhaustion caused by burnout is usually occurred as reduced self-esteem and negative attitudes toward the relationships, particularly relationships with their spouses (Lee et al., 2001).

Marital discord is another important variable in family studies. Marital adjustment is a situation in which the husband and wife receive a sense of happiness and satisfaction from each other, which is commonly created through mutual interest, caring for each other, acceptance, understanding each other, and meeting each other's needs including sexual need. Happily married couples who are satisfied with their marital life usually have a great

deal of agreement with each other, they are satisfied with the type and level of their relationships, they are contented with the type and quality of spending leisure time, and they resolve their financial issues well. On the other hand, discordance in the relationships of couples generates disorder in social relationships and leads to social deviance and the decline of cultural values among husbands and wives (Jonaidy et al., 2009). Researchers' attention to discordance and marital problems in people's lives is considered to be one of the main components of healthcare services (Snyder et al., 2006), and since family is the basis and foundation of personal and social life and the husband and wife are the main figures existing in the center of the family, any effort to protect their relationships against potential harms is necessary and valuable (Azadi et al., 2014).

Over the years, researchers sought to measure the validity and effectiveness of counseling patterns in the field of family and marriage counseling (Wood et al., 2005). Alternatively, growing efforts concerning mental health in the world in the early years of the twenty-first century highlights the importance of examining the effect of various counseling patterns. Indeed, the important question is that *which type of counseling is better?* (Bagarozzi & Sperry, 2004). Bowen systematic counseling is one of the common methods based on balancing between the two emotions of being together and being separated. In fact, the cornerstone of Bowen's theory is his idea about those forces that are within the family and seek unity and togetherness or, conversely, seek individuality. Since each family includes at least three generations (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012) with a generational

function, each generation has also intergenerational function (previous generations breed the next generation), it is expected that when children leave their homes, they become mature and independent adults. Some people value individuality and regard it as a sign of growth as they get separated from their parents; whereas, some others wish they could get closer to their families (Nichols & Schwartz, 2014). Bowen (1978) assumes family as an emotional unit and a network of intertwined relationships. The threads of this intertwinement can be so firm and thick that permanently hamper the ability of a person to act freely and independently and she or he will always be imprisoned in this emotional world if she or he is always willing to compromise on his or her weak and unstable identity (Carey, 2005 as cited in Naeimi et al., 2014).

Solution-focused counseling is another effective counseling method. The solution-focused approach is a method in the field of family counseling and is categorized into the postmodern and new theories. This method not only ignores an individual's past, but also looks at the existing problems with lower attention and puts the main emphasis on available solutions. The solution-focused approach insists on this belief that focusing on the past and analyzing its problems is a long-term and useless process (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012). In this therapy, it is assumed that advisees are not able to identify their best personal goals (Kok-Mun et al., 2012). This approach puts emphasis on individuals' deficits and disabilities rather than focusing on highlighting capabilities and accomplishments of people and creates supportive relationships in the treatment process (Davarniya et al., 2014).

In the solution-focused therapy, slow detection of exceptions in advisees' life can induce hope and help them to see they are approaching to a better future (Pichot, 2007). Based on solution-focused perspective, change and transformation is an inevitable subject and constructive changes are possible; therefore, in this type of therapy instead of hard and unchangeable areas, the focus is on issues that are likely to be changed. For this reason, the solution-focused therapy has been known as hope counseling (Shakarami et al., 2013).

Some researches including Yektatalab et al (2017), Palombi (2016), Kim et al. (2015), Smith and Macduff (2017), Karkhane et al. (2015), Hashemi et al. (2014), Asadi (2014), Nilab (2014), have shown the effectiveness of Bowen systematic method; however, other researchers such as Hsu et al. (2017), Smith and Macduff (2017), Gong and Hsu (2017), Creswell et al. (2017), Lotfi and Motamedi (2016), Mahmudi et al. (2015), Shakarami et al. (2015) have illustrated the effectiveness of solution-focused counseling on various psychological and family variables.

According to various studies, currently the main subject in this research is that which one of counseling therapy methods (Bowen therapy or solution-focused) is more effective in reducing the risk of divorce, burnout and marital discord in discordant women of Ardabil in 2016?

2. Method

The research method is experimental with multiple group pretest-posttest design and a control group. The population included all discordant women who attended or being

referred to the Justice Department of Ardabil in 2016, out of which 45 women were selected based on convenience sampling method and randomly assigned to three groups. One week prior to the implementation of counseling methods, the pre-test was conducted, then for the first group (15 women) the solution-focused counseling method (Zimmerman et al., 1997) in 7 sessions of 1.5 hours each; for the second group (15 women), Bowen systematic method (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012) in 7 sessions of 1.5 hours each, was applied; however, the third group (15 women) did not receive any counseling. Finally, one week after the implementation of counseling methods, the post-test was administered.

2.1. Research tools

Marital Burnout Questionnaire: This 21-item questionnaire was developed by Pines (2004) and is a self-assessment tool comprised of three main components. The physical exhaustion includes tiredness, frailty feelings and having sleep disorders. The questions are scored in a 7-point Likert scale method from 1 = Never to 7 = Always (Pines, 2004). Navidi (2005) distributed the aforementioned questionnaire to a sample of 240 respondents and attained the reliability coefficient of 0.86, calculating Cronbach's alpha and correlation coefficient of -0.40 for the validity of this test using ENRICH marital satisfaction scale (1989). In addition, Panahi et al. (2017) in their research reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 for the total score of the test and coefficients of 0.80, 0.83 and 0.85 for each subscales of physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion and mental exhaustion respectively. Similarly, the reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was 0.82.

Marital Instability Index (Divorce Risk):

Marital Instability Index (MII) questionnaire was developed by [Edwards et al., \(1987\)](#) to measure and evaluate marital instability, particularly for susceptibility to divorce. This questionnaire has 14 items. It is based on the presupposition that both aspects of cognition and behavior should be considered to assess instability and the presence of potential in couples for divorce. This tool was initially used for 2034 married men and women aged below 55 in 1980. The scoring method for each section is very easy according to its instruction, where the scores of the same sections are considered. This tool has a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93; it has a good predictive validity. The Marital Instability Index has a consistent validity and is positively correlated with marital problems; whereas, it shows a negative correlation with marital happiness and marital interaction ([Edwards et al., 1987](#)). Correspondingly, the reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was 0.91.

Beier-Sternberg Discord Questionnaire (DQ): The Beier-Sternberg Discord Questionnaire (DQ) ([Beier & Sternberg, 1977](#)) has 10 items that are designed to assess two aspects of a marital relationship, i.e., differences or conflicts and the degree of dissatisfaction alongside these differences. The items in Beier-Sternberg Discord Questionnaire were selected based on the background that studied the main sources of these marital conflicts. Primarily, each respondent gives a score to the issue that has provoked conflict in his or

her marriage, then evaluates how much this conflict has made him or her dissatisfied. Items in this questionnaire are separately scored. However, this tool is able to independently analyze the aspects of marital relationships. This questionnaire was completed with the collaboration of newly married couples (who had formally expressed their consent). The couples were heterogeneously selected and contacted one year after their marriage. The results showed that conflicts after one year of marriage have a significant relationship with general post-marriage struggles. In scoring, each item is individually scored in a 7-point Likert scale; higher scores indicate more struggle and dissatisfaction ([Ghamari Kiwi et al., 2015](#)). This questionnaire has a degree of concurrent validity and there is a significant correlation between the degree of dissatisfaction and conflict. It should be noted that there is also a relationship between the scores of this tool and a wide range of intimate behaviors. For women, this tool has a capability to predict issues in later years of marital life ([Beier & Sternberg, 1977](#)). Similarly, the reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was 0.89.

2.2. Intervention methods

For the first experimental group, the Solution focused therapy was presented in 7 sessions of an hour and a half, and for the second experimental group, Bowen's systemic counseling therapy was presented in 7 sessions of an hour and a half; the general strategies of these sessions are given in [Tables 1 and 2](#).

Table 1

Summary of the solution-oriented counseling method program

Session	Titles and goals of counseling
1	Becoming familiar with members, making members familiar with the principles, goals and effects of the solution-oriented perspective, setting frameworks and expressing the general principles of the solution-oriented perspective, conducting a pre-test
2	Helping participants formulate their goals in a positive, definite, tangible, and measurable way.
3	Helping participants to discover that there are different interpretations of an event in the family and they are able to change their perception of the problems in a more useful way and helping participants to realize their capabilities and resources.
4	Helping participants to identify positive exceptions in life with their spouse and build hope based on them and reduce their areas of problem.
5	Breaking down different behavioral patterns designed by participants using miraculous questions.
6	Helping participants find other ways to think, feel, and behave instead of doing what they are doing now, and to experience new emotions using the concept of "instead" as their goal.
7	Reviewing goals and answering the participants' questions and giving final summary of all sessions and post-test

Table 2

Summary of the Bowen System Consulting Program

Session	Titles and goals of counseling
1	Becoming familiar with members, pre-test, explanation about counseling and counseling goals
2	Assessing the family, drawing the genealogy of the members and examining their patterns
3	Becoming familiar with and working on the concept of differentiation and explanation of the separation of thoughts from feelings and separation of the individual from the family, evaluating individuals in this regard
4	Introducing members to the concept of interdependence and how to improve it
5	Becoming familiar with the family with the concepts of triangulation and the emotional system of the nuclear family and their effect on creating and perpetuating the problem
6	Becoming familiar with family with the concepts of family projection and emotional breakdown and their impact on family problems
7	Making the members Becoming familiar with the status of nurses and the process of intergenerational transfer and review of all sessions and post-test

3. Results

Table 3 reports the descriptive indicators of research variables including the mean and

standard deviation of groups in pre-test and post-test.

Table 3

Descriptive indicators of the research variables for experimental and control group

	Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Divorce risk	Control	7.133	3.735	6.601	3.960
	Bowen systematic counseling	7.933	1.791	3.366	0.703
	Solution-focused counseling	6.133	3.398	2.215	1.021
Physical exhaustion	Control	26.60	2.746	28.60	1.352
	Bowen systematic counseling	31.066	1.709	21.66	2.526
	Solution-focused counseling	30.80	5.518	17.066	7.391
Mental exhaustion	Control	28.12	1.788	28.80	1.656
	Bowen systematic counseling	30.334	3.177	20.80	3.385
	Solution-focused counseling	30.133	5.085	22.533	2.852
Emotional exhaustion	Control	30.20	3.529	30.80	2.858
	Bowen systematic counseling	32.066	2.344	21.266	3.750
	Solution-focused counseling	33.133	6.770	14.20	3.949
Overall burnout	Control	4.248	0.343	4.20	0.395
	Bowen systematic counseling	4.753	0.458	3.350	0.573
	Solution-focused counseling	4.732	0.590	3.041	0.474
Discord	Control	84.80	16.746	84.75	12.585
	Bowen systematic counseling	103.733	5.921	73.80	20.178
	Solution-focused counseling	65.21	2.31	75.50	35.31

As shown in Table 3, the mean score of divorce risk among discordant women in control group was 7.13, which decreased to 6.60 in the post-test. The mean score of divorce risk among discordant women in the pre-test of Bowen systematic counseling group was 7.933, which decreased to 3.366 in the post-test. The mean score of in pre-test solution-focused counseling group is 6.133, which decreased to 2.215 in the post-test. The mean score of marital burnout among discordant women in control group was 4.248, which almost remained fixed at 4.20 in the post-test. The mean score of marital burnout among discordant women in the pre-test Bowen systematic counseling group was 4.753,

which decreased to 3.35 in the post-test. The mean score of marital burnout in pre-test solution-focused counseling group was 4.732, which decreased to 3.041 in the post-test. The mean score of physical exhaustion among discordant women in control group was 26.61, which increased to 28.6 in the post-test. The mean score of physical exhaustion among discordant women in pre-test Bowen systematic counseling group was 31.06, which decreased to 21.66 in the post-test. The mean score of physical exhaustion in the pre-test solution-focused counseling group was 30.8, which decreased to 17.06 in the post-test. The mean score of emotional exhaustion among discordant women in control group was

30.20, which increased to 30.80 in post-test. The mean score of emotional exhaustion among discordant women in the pre-test Bowen systematic counseling group was 32.06, which decreased to 21.26 in the post-test. The mean score of emotional exhaustion in the pre-test solution-focused counseling group was 33.13, which decreased to 14.2 in the post-test. The mean score of mental exhaustion among discordant women in control group was 28.12, which increased to 28.80 in the post-test. The mean score of mental exhaustion among discordant women in the pre-test Bowen systematic counseling group was 30.33, which decreased to 20.80 in the post-test. The mean score of mental exhaustion in the pre-test solution-focused counseling group was 30.13, which decreased to 22.53 in the post-test. Moreover, the mean score of marital discord among discordant women in control group was 84.80, which almost remained constant at 84.75 in the post-test. The mean score of marital discord among discordant women in the pre-test of Bowen systematic counseling group was 103.73, which decreased to 73.80 in the post-test. The mean score of marital discord in the pre-test solution-focused counseling group was 65.21, which increased to 75.50 in the post-test.

Multivariable Analyze of Variance was also used to compare the effectiveness of Bowen systematic and solution-focused counseling in reducing the risk of divorce, burnout, and marital discord among discordant women. It should be noted that the presumptions of this test were examined and confirmed before using Multivariable Analyze of Variance. The Levene F statistic was not significant for any of the components; thus, the variance of variables

in groups was homogeneous. The F statistic linearity of the pre-test with the post-test of components was significant, therefore there was a significant linear relationship between the pre-test and the post-test of variables. The F statistic difference of groups in the pre-test of components was not significant. The consistency test of regression slope was not significant for the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression slope of the pre-test and the post-test was homogenous in both groups. Correspondingly, the F statistic of Box's M Test was not significant; therefore, regarding the non-significance of this statistic, it can be concluded that the Multivariable Analyze of Variance of dependent variables of the groups were equal. Hence, considering the establishment of presuppositions, we could employ the Multivariable Analyze of Variance. The results of Multivariable Analyze of Variance are reported in [Table 4](#).

Table 4

The results of Multivariable Analyze of Variance (MANOVA) of variables of the study

The source of change	Dependent Variable	SS	df	MS	F	P	Eta
Treatment Method	Divorce Risk	166.289	2	83.144	11.00	0.001	0.455
	Burnout	1.697	2	0.849	3.669	0.030	0.661
	Marital Discord	5128.822	2	2564.411	8.390	0.001	0.335
Pretest-Posttest	Divorce Risk	266.944	1	266.944	35.316	0.001	0.802
	Burnout	24.712	1	24.712	106.834	0.001	0.987
	Marital Discord	1013.378	1	1013.378	3.316	0.072	0.958
Treatment Method * Pretest-Posttest	Divorce Risk	96.156	2	48.078	6.361	0.003	0.208
	Burnout	11.547	2	5.774	24.961	0.001	0.080
	Marital Discord	6767.22	2	3383.611	11.070	0.001	0.167

Based on [Table 4](#), there was no significant difference between the mean of marital discord among the participants of the pre-test and the post-test ($p < 0.05$). Nonetheless, the mean of marital burnout and divorce risk in pre-test and post-test had a significant difference. The results also highlighted that solution-focused

therapy was more effective than Bowen systematic counseling in reducing of the divorce risk, burnout and marital discord.

The Duncan's post hoc test was also used to examine the effect of counseling methods on research variables, the result is reported in [Table 5](#).

Table 5

The results from Duncan's post hoc test for the effectiveness of solution-focused counseling and Bowen systematic counseling on the reduction of divorce risk, burnout, and marital discord

Group	Group	Marital Discord		Marital Burnout		Divorce Risk	
		Mean Difference	Sig	Mean Difference	Sig	Mean Difference	Sig
Control	Solution-focused	20.663	0.001	0.336	0.022	3.30	0.001
	Bowen	-7.466	0.267	0.172	0.350	1.266	0.181
Solution-focused	Control	-20.663	0.001	-0.336	0.022	-3.30	0.001
	Bowen	-28.10	0.001	-0.163	0.389	-2.033	0.014
Bowen	Control	7.466	0.267	-0.172	0.350	-1.266	0.181
	Solution-focused	28.10	0.267	0.163	0.389	2.033	0.014

The results of Duncan's analysis showed that there was no difference between the control group and Bowen's systematic counseling in both stages in reducing the risk of divorce of incompatible women ([Table 5](#)). In other words, the post-test

scores did not show a significant decrease compared to the pre-test. On the other hand, between the two groups, the control group with solution-oriented counseling in both stages was useful in reducing the risk of divorce of discordant females. In other

words, in the post-test, the scores illustrated a significant decrease compared to the pre-test. There was a significant difference between the two methods of counseling. Moreover, the results of Duncan's analysis illustrated that there was no significant difference between Bowen's control group and systematic counseling in both stages in reducing marital incompatibility of discordant females. In other words, in the post-test, the scores did not show a significant decrease compared to the pre-test. On the other hand, between the two groups, control with the solution-oriented counseling group was useful in both stages in reducing marital incompatibility of discordant females. In other words, in the post-test, the scores showed a significant decrease compared to the pre-test. The two methods of counseling applied were significantly different. Besides, solution-oriented counseling method was more effective in reducing marital incompatibility than Bowen systemic counseling method. Similarly, the results of Duncan's analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between Bowen's control group and systematic counseling in both stages in reducing marital boredom of discordant females. That is to say, in the post-test, the scores did not show a significant decrease compared to the pre-test. On the other hand, there was a significant difference between the two groups, control with solution-oriented counseling in both stages in reducing marital boredom of discordant females. In other words, in the post-test, the scores revealed a significant decrease compared to the pre-test. There was no significant difference between the two methods of counseling.

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted to compare the effectiveness of Bowen systematic and solution-focused counseling in reducing the divorce risk, burnout, and marital discord among discordant women. The results showed that solution-focused therapy was more effective than Bowen systematic counseling in reducing the divorce risk, burnout and marital discord. There was no research background comparing the effectiveness of Bowen systematic therapy with solution-focused therapy. Nevertheless, separate studies stressed the effectiveness of solution-focused counseling method (Shahi & Ouji Nejad, 2014; Dastbaz et al., 2014; Sehat et al., 2014; Hosseini et al., 2013) and Bowen systematic method (Karkhane et al., 2015; Hashemi et al., 2014; Asadi, 2014; Nilab, 2014; Bilge & Engin, 2016; Smith & Macduff, 2017; Sarvi & ghazi, 2016) on similar variables.

To explain the results of the present study, it can be said that in solution-focused counseling method, the therapist focuses on present time and ask the advisees to explore their present life and find exceptions, imagine if something magic happens, what would be their ideal life; in some way, they would realize their desires and wishes in the present time and, accordingly, they would find solutions to the problem by themselves. On the other hand, it can be said that in solution-focused counseling method, the gradual discovery of exceptions in life can induce hope in advisees to see they are approaching a better future (Pichot, 2007). In counseling sessions, because of the technique of exception question, advisees could remember moments that they did not have any problems with their spouse resulted

from marital relationship; if any, the severity of these problems was very low, extracting these problem-free moments allowing the them to realize how was their marital relationships in those situations and what they were doing, so that they treat each other similarly at present. In solution-focused counseling method due to scaling questions, the therapist asks the advisees to identify the degree of their problems based on a rating scale of 1 to 10. These questions help the advisees to determine the progress or failure of a particular issue outside or inside the counseling session (Lethem, 2002). Spouses often respond to each other without thinking and insist on their behavior without achieving desired results. Solution-focused therapists help spouses to stop blaming one another and put emphasis on understanding each other; they also change useless patterns and reach a better balance (Jenny Steele, 1997). In addition to exceptions and scaling questions, miracle question is another intervention question used by solution-focused therapists. Miracle question help to find information about the advisees' view about the future or look for a solution to solve the problem. Solution-focused therapist asks the advisees whether a miracle happens today and your problem is solved, what will you do differently; How do you recognize that your problem has been solved? Using these questions help the advisees to find a different way to look at their problems and can be an important step in the change process (De Castro & Gattermann, 2008). In the therapy sessions, when miracle question was used for the advisees who were disappointed with their lives, spouse as well as the future of their marriage, they were told to imagine if suddenly a miracle happened and all problems related to their spouses ended, then what would happen,

what changes they would realize, and how they recognized that their problems were over? This technique helped the advisees to imagine a different life where they no longer had a problem with their spouses, it created a good imagination in their minds and, consequently, they became more hopeful to their own life. To explain the obtained results, it can be added that in counseling sessions when the advisees were asked questions using admiration technique to admire any positive behavior of their spouses, although a slight one, and to put emphasis on positive points of their spouses, they were able to improve their emotional communication with their life partner by admiring their spouses, and, thus, establish a better relationship with them (Nazari et al., 2015); accordingly, the divorce risk and its related factors such as burnout and marital discord were reduced. In addition, regarding the reason for lower success of Bowen systematic method in reducing divorce risk, burnout, and marital discord, it can be argued that since this counseling method concentrates more on the past, when the advisee is explained that the reason for his or her current behavior derives from his or her past, it may cause a mental issue for the advisee. However, both of these methods can be used in a specific situation and produce a desired outcome. One of the limitations of the present study was the use of self-report scale (questionnaire) to measure dependent variables. Although the tools used in this study had a good validity and reliability, responses might be partially affected by social desirability or the subjects' condition at the time of answering the questions. The follow-up test was not used due to the time limit; therefore, it is recommended the other researchers use other tools such as interviews and observations in future

studies for data collection and follow-up periods should be considered. Correspondingly, since counseling methods and interventions that are conducted on families are more effective when they are performed in a multidimensional mode, it is suggested that subsequent researchers provide the context of support and continuity of the intended counseling changes by performing simultaneous counseling with the spouse of the advisees.

5. Conclusion

This study provided empirical evidence for the more effectiveness solution-oriented counseling method. Therefore, psychologists and family therapists can benefit from this method to decrease the risk of divorce, boredom and marital incompatibility in discordant females.

Acknowledgment

The researchers appreciate all the people who contributed to this research.

Conflict of interest

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any organization. Also, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

Asadi, S. (2014). *Comparison of the Effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy and Boehni in Improving*

Quality of Life and Psychological Well-being and Resilience Based on the Role of Differentiation Control. Master's thesis, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Science and Culture, Tehran.

Azadi, Z., Kimiyaei, A., Abasi Borandarag, S. (2014). Relationship of the ability to solve family problem and irrational beliefs with marital problems and incompatibility. *Quarterly Journal of Advanced Psychological Research*, 9(36), 8-24. <https://www.sid.ir/fa/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?id=290730>

Bagarozzi, D. A., & Sperry, L. (2004). Couples' assessment strategy and inventories. In *Assesment of couples and families: Contemporary and cutting-edge strategies* (pp. 157-182). New York: Bruner-Rutledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203308271>

Beier, E. G., Sternberg, D. P. (1977). Marital communication. *Journal of Communication*. Instrument reproduced with permission of Ernest G. Beier & Daniel P. Sternberg, 27, 92-100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1977.tb02131.x>

Bilge, A., & Engin, E. (2016). Effectiveness of the solution focused therapy which is based on interpersonal relationship theory. *Retrospective investigation*. *Araştırma*, 17(4), 261-269. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Effectiveness+of+the+solution+focused+therapy+which+is+based+on+interpersonal+relationship+theory&btnG=

Blumer, M. L. C., & Murphy, M. J. (2011). Alaskan gay males' couple experiences of societal non-support: Coping through families of choice and therapeutic means. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 33(1), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-011-9147-5>.

Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. New York, NY: Aronson.

Campbell, T.L. (2013). The Effectiveness of Family Interventions for Physical Disorders.

- Journal of Marital and Family*, 29(2), 263-281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2003.tb01204.x>
- Creswell, C., Violato, M., Fairbanks, H., White, E., Parkinson, M., Abitabile, G., Leidi, A., & Cooper, P. (2017). A randomised controlled trial of Brief Guided Parent-delivered Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Solution Focused Brief Therapy for the treatment of child anxiety disorders: clinical outcome and cost-effectiveness. *The Lancet Psychiatry*. ISSN 22150366 (In Press). https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=A+randomised+controlled+trial+of+Brief+Guided+Parent
- Dastbaz, A., Younesi, J., Moradi, O., & Ebrahimi, M. (2014). The Effect of Solution - Focused Group Counseling on Adjustment and Self- Efficacy of High School Male Students in Shahriar City. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 15(55), 90-98. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=377851>
- Davarniya, R., Zaharakar, K., & Nazari A M. (2015). the effect of brief solution-focused couple therapy (BSFCT) approach on reducing couple burnout dimensions in women. *The Journal of Urmia Nursing and Midwifery Faculty*, 1(1), 36-46. <http://unmf.umsu.ac.ir/article-1-1729-en.html>
- De Castro, S., & Guterman, J.T. (2008). Solution-focused therapy for families coping with suicide. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 34, 1, 93–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2008.00055.x>
- Edwards, J. N., Johnson, D. R., & Booth, A. (1987). Coming apart: A prognostic instrument of marital breakup. *Family Relations*. *Instrument reprinted by permission of the National Council on Family Relations*, 36(2), 168-170. <https://doi.org/10.2307/583948>
- Ghamari Kiwi, H., Karimi Yousefi, H., Khoshnodniya Chomachaei, B., & Sadeghi Valani, Z. (2015). *Family and Marriage Measurement*. Ardabil: University of Mohaghegh Ardabil University Press.
- Goldenberg, H., & Goldenberg, I. (2012). *Family therapy: An overview*. Cengage Learning.
- Gong, H., & Hsu, W. (2017). The Effectiveness of Solution-Focused Group Therapy in Ethnic Chinese School Settings: A Meta-Analysis. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 67(3), 383-409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207284.2016.1240588>
- Gonzalez, L. & et al. (2009). The Effect of Divorce Laws on Divorce Rates in Europe. *European Economic Review*, 53(2), 127-138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2008.05.005>
- Hashemi, M., Zade Mohamadi, A., & Jarar, J. (2014). The Effectiveness of Group Learning on the Concepts of the Bowen System Approach on the Distinction of Mothers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 8(1), 29-46. <https://www.sid.ir/fa/Journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=493077>
- Herrington, R. L., Mitchell, A. E., Castellani, A. M., Joseph, J. I., Snyder, D. K., & Gleaves, D. H. (2008). Assessing disharmony and disaffection in intimate relationships: Revision of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory factor scales. *Psychological assessment*, 20, 4, 341-50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013759>
- Hosseini, T., Amiri Majd, M., Ghamari, M. (2013). The Effectiveness of Solution-Based Counseling (SFT), on Increasing Women's Marital Intimacy. *Family Health Quarterly*, 1, 4, 52-58. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=391620>
- Hsu, W., Lin, H.J., Melody Sun, S.T., & Chen, H.J. (2017). The Training Effects of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling on Telephone-Counseling Volunteers in Taiwan. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 28(4), 285-302.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/08975353.2017.1297066>
- Jenny Steele, J. (1997). *Applying an integration of solution focused therapy and Family of origin therapy models in working with couples*. [Dissertation]. University of Manitoba Winnipeg, Manitoba. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/services/theses/Pages/item.aspx?idNumber=1007118309>
- Jonaidy, E., Noorani, S., Sadodin, SH., Mokber, N., & Shakeri, M. (2009). Comparing the marital satisfaction in infertile and fertile woman referred to the public clinics in Mashhad. *Iran jobstet Gynecol*, 1(12), 6-7. https://ijogi.mums.ac.ir/article_5898.html?lang=en
- Karkhane P., Jazayeri R., Bahrami F., & Fatehizade M. (2015). Investigating the Effect of Boyen Self-Discrimination Based Education on the Attemptation of Married Women in Isfahan. *Personality Quarterly and Individual Differences*, 4(7), 168-183. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=468074>
- Kim, H., Prouty, A.N., Smith, D.B., KO, MJ. , Watchler, JL., Euo Oh, J. (2015). Differentiation and Healthy Family Functioning of Koreans in South Korea, South Koreans in the United States, and White Americans. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 41(1), 72-85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12049>
- Kok-Mun, N.G., Sejal, P., & Lan, G. (2012). Integrative solution-focused brief therapy with a Chinese female college student dealing with relationship loss. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, 34(3), 211-30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-012-9152-x>
- Lee, Ty. Sun, G.H., & Chao, S.C. (2001). The effect of an infertility diagnosis on the distress, marital and sexual satisfaction between husbands and wives in Taiwan. *Human Reproduction*, 16, 1762-1767. <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/16.8.1762>
- Lethem, J. (2002). Brief solution focused therapy. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 7, 189-192. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-3588.00033>
- Lievaart, M., Huijding, J., Van der Veen, F. M., Hovens, J. E., & Franken, I. H. A. (2017). The impact of angry rumination on anger-primed cognitive control. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 54, 135-142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbtep.2016.07.016>
- Lotfi, A., Motamedi, A. (2016). Studying the influence of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy on increasing resiliency of boy teenagers at risk in one of military counties. *Journal of military Psychology*, 7, 25, 37-49. https://jmp.ihu.ac.ir/article_201218_4f7df013d4d1e4ca1d932cf5ae148e39.pdf?lang=en
- Mahmudi, M.J., Sanai, B., Nazari, A.M., Davarniya, R., Bakhtiari Said B., & Shakarami, M. (2015). The Effectiveness of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) on Reducing Couple Burnout and Improvement of the Quality of Life of Married Women. *Armaghane-danesh. Yasuj University of Medical Sciences Journal (YUMSJ)*, 20, 5, 100, 417-433. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=482051>
- Naeimi, G., Pirsaghi, F., Bashirpoor, M., & Akbari Z. (2015). The role of the main family health components and their differentiation in predicting the desire for marriage in the students. *Quarterly Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 6, 21, 87-107. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22054/qccpc.2015.4190>
- Navidi, F. (2005). *Investigating and comparing the relationship between marital morbidity and organizational climate factors in the staff of educational and nursing offices of Tehran hospitals*, unpublished dissertation in the field of counseling, Shahid Beheshti University.

- Nazari, A.M., Rasouli, M., Davarniya, R., Hosseini, A., & Babaei Gharmkhani, M. (2015). Effectiveness of Solution- Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) on Couple Burnout and Divorce Tendency in Married Women. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatric Nursing*, 3(3), 43-54. http://ijpn.ir/browse.php?a_id=616&sid=1&slc_lang=en
- Nichols, M.P., & Schwartz, R.C. (2014). *Family therapy: concepts and methods*. Translat: Dehghani, M., Ghanjavi, A., Najarian, F., Rasooli, S., Zademohamadi, A., Tahmasebian, K. (2014). Tehran: Denghe Publishing.
- Nilab, R. (2014). *Study of Differentiation and Marital Satisfaction and the Effectiveness of Bowen's Approach on Promoting these Two Components in Turkish Women and Turkmen*. Master's thesis, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad. https://tpccp.um.ac.ir/article_33237.html?lang=en
- Palombi, M. (2016). Separations: A Personal Account of Bowen Family Systems Theory. *Journal of Family therapy*, 37(3), 327-339. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1170>
- Panahi, M., Kazemi Jamarani, Sh., Enayatpoor Shahrabaki, M., & Rostami M. (2017). The Effectiveness of Behavioral-Combined Therapy Coupled on reducing marital distress and fear of intimacy of couples. *Quarterly Journal of Applied Psychology*, 3(11), 1-19. <https://dorl.net/dor/20.1001.1.20084331.1396.11.4.4.7>
- Pichot, T. (2007). *Looking beyond depression*. In T. S. Nelson & F. N. Thomas (Eds.), *Handbook of solution focused brief therapy: Clinical applications*. New York, N Haworth, 117-124.
- Pines, A. M. (2004). Adult attachment styles and their relationship to burnout: A preliminary, cross-cultural investigation. *Work and Stress*, 18, 66-80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370310001645025>
- Pines, A. M., & Nunes, R. (2003). The relationship between career and couple burnout: implications for career and couple counseling. *Journal of employment counseling*, 40, 2, 50-64. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.21611920.2003.tb00856.x>
- Sadegi Fasaei, S., & Isari, M. (2014). Sociology Study of Divorce. *Social Issues of Iran*, 6(1), 131-156. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=489491>
- Sarvi, z., & Ghazi, M. (2016). Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Solution Focused (Brief) Therapy (SFBT) on Increasing Self-Efficacy of Fifth Grade Primary School Female Students. *Modern Applied Science*, 10, 12, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.5539/mas.v10n12p1>
- Sehat, F., Sehat, N., Khanjani, S., Mohebi, S., & Shahsiah, M. (2014). The effect of solution- focused short-term approach on marital conflict decrease in Qom. *Health Research Journal*, 10, 2, 268-275. <https://www.sid.ir/fa/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=237408>
- Shahi, Z., Ojinejad, A.R. (2014). The Effectiveness of Solution-Based Education on Increasing the Level of Social Adjustment and Solving the Identity Conflict of Girl's Adolescents. *Journal of Women and Society*, 5(1), 21-40. http://jzvj.marvdasht.iau.ir/article_513.html?lang=en
- Shakarmi, M., Davarniya, R., & Zaharakar K. (2013). The Effectiveness of Solution-focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) on Reducing Marital Stress in Women. *Scientific Journal of Ilam University of Medical Sciences*, 22 (4),18-26. https://sjimu.medilam.ac.ir/browse.php?a_id=1509&sid=1&slc_lang=en
- Shakarmi, M., Davarniya, R., Zaharakar, K., & Talaieian, R. (2015). Effectiveness of brief solution-focused group couple therapy on improving marital quality in women. *Razi Journal of Medical Sciences*, 22(131), 1-13.

- <http://rjms.iuums.ac.ir/article-1-3776-en.html>
- Smith, S., & Macduff, C. (2017). A thematic analysis of experience of UK mental health nurses who have trained in Solution focused Brief Therapy. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 24 (2-3), 105-113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12365>
- Snyder, D.K., Castellani, A. M., & Whisman, M. A. (2006). Current status and future directions in couple therapy. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57, 317-344. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070154>
- Wood, N., Crane, D.R., Schaalje, G.B., Law, D.D. (2005). What works for whom: A meta-analytic review of marital and couples therapy in reference to marital distress. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 33, 273-287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180590962147>
- Yekttalab, Sh., Seddigh Oskouee, F., Sodani, M. (2017). Efficacy of Bowen Theory on Marital Conflict in the Family Nursing Practice: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 38, 3, 253-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2016.1261210>
- Zimmerman, T.S., Prest, L.A., & Wetzel, B.E. (1997). Solution-focused couple therapy groups: An empirical study. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 19, 2, 125-44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.00044>