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The Effectiveness of Positive Inner Self-Talks Training in Increasing the Happiness of Spouses of Veterans

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the effectiveness of positive inner self-talks training in increasing the happiness of spouses of veterans. This research was a quasi-experimental study with pre-test-post-test design and a control group. Statistical population of this study included all spouses of veterans of Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs of region 2 in Mashhad. Among them, ٢٤ persons were selected by convenience sampling method and randomly assigned to two groups of 12 persons. The experimental group received 8 sessions of 90 minutes of positive inner self-talks training and the control group did not receive any treatment. In this research, MUNSH Happiness Questionnaire was used to collect data. Data were analyzed by analysis of covariance and multivariate analysis of variance using SPSS software. Results showed that positive inner self-talks training significantly increased the happiness of spouses of veterans (P<0/05). It also had significant effect on positive and negative affects, but it had no significant effect on positive and negative experiences. The results of the present study indicate that positive inner self-talks training is effective in increasing the happiness of spouses of veterans.

Keywords: Spouses of Veterans, Positive Inner Self-Talks, Happiness

Introduction:

Happiness is one of human's needs and it is essential to his life (Loghmani, 2007). Happiness is a prominent form of positive emotion that arises from individual's inside and mind. Since the origin of happiness is not clear, no explicit definition has been presented by psychological scientists and only a specific encounter of it is taken into consideration. By expressing the neglect of psychologists about happiness issue, Henry Murray considers this trait as the result of inner state, but Plato and Aristotle have

identified it as the best thing that is accessible through activity (Plutchik, translated by Ramezanzadeh, 2008).
On the other hand, Rieo has considered happiness as a positive feeling that arises from the sense of satisfaction and success (Rieo, translated by Seyed Mohammadi, 2014). Isenk defines it as the sum of pleasures, minus pains and a combination of high positive affect and low negative affect (Isenk, translated by Beigi and Firoozbakht, 1996). Seligman interchangeably uses happiness and health and considers them as comprehensive words used to describe the goals of positive psychology generality (Carr, 2006). There are convincing evidences that happy individuals act better than unhappy individuals in making important decisions in real life. As a result, a positive mood leads us to a completely different way of thinking compared to a negative mood and it directs us to a creative, receptive, generous, lateral and indefensible thinking. The aim of this thinking is to recognize, not the disadvantages, but the advantages of a choice. This process may occur even in different parts of the brain and its neurochemical process is different from thinking in the state of negative mood (Carr, 2006). The key to happiness and satisfaction is to focus the mind on the present moment; that is to recognize the fact that our entire asset is the present moment and the amount of mind's calmness and our personal efficiency are determined based on the amount of the ability to live in the present moment. Victor Hugo states that all our life long is a continuous effort for achieving prosperity and success, while perhaps it is the very moment we think of it (Lumsden, translated by Rafiee Mehrabadi, 2011).

Sometimes a small change makes big differences. For example, the difference between "I can" and " I cannot" could be so great. By selecting the positive thinking, we can choose positive goals, words and activities and create positive conditions in life (Perston, translated by Farrokh, 2011). Words which are used are more powerful than thoughts, because not only do words affect ourselves, but also affect individuals and environment. The word “Self- talk” is related to the cognitive approach. Cognitive therapy emphasizes on the role of belief systems and thinking in behavior and feelings. The focus of cognitive therapy is recognizing distorted beliefs and changing maladaptive thoughts using techniques including behavioral and emotional techniques (Beck, translated by Gharachedaghi, 2003). In 1967, Beck found his patients, particularly depressive patients, having special inner talks that consist of self-blame and criticism. These patients mostly have failure or disaster expectancy and have negative interpretations when disaster interpretations are appropriate (Sharf, translated by Firoozbakht, 2002). In order to achieve personal success, we should use words which are appropriate in daily talks and be consistent with what we want to create in our goals and life. In fact, words determine the destiny. Words can greatly produce positive effects on the reactions of individuals whom we meet in daily life (Rezazadeh, 2012).
Self-talk is usually a part of the thinking process or a part of what is called consciousness (Franklin, 2003). Whenever human is thinking about something, he is talking with himself. Self-talk is the key to cognition (Bunker, Williams & Zinsser, 1993). Individuals plan for their life since birth, and 75 % or more of their planning may be negative and against them (Helmstetter, 1990). Kross, Senecal, Park & Moser (2014) in their research mentioned inner self-talk as a self-regulation mechanism.
On the other hand, much research has shown that many health problems and mental disorders have social root. One of the most prominent of these problems is war. The eight-year imposed war against Iran not only did harm the economic and social structures very much, but also caused various mental injuries to families and these damages have involved them for a long time after the war (Parandeh, Sirati Nayer, Khaghanizadeh & Karimi Zarchi, 2006).
Nowadays that this war has ended and community is in calmness and security, it is a national duty to pay special attention to their life condition (Zavian, 1991).

Research Background

The effectiveness of self-talk methods has been examined in various researches such as Kazemian (2010) who has proved the effect of cognitive therapy based on self-talk technique in reducing social phobia. This research was an experimental study using pre-test and post-test with a control group design. The experimental group received ten sessions of 90 minutes of cognitive therapy based on self-talk. Results showed that cognitive therapy based on self-talk technique was effective in reducing social phobia.

In a research by Ismaeeli (2006), the effectiveness of self-talk technique training based on reality in resolving marital conflicts was examined. In this case study, it was attempted to explore the effectiveness of treatment with self-talk technique based on reality in three subjects. The results showed that this therapy was effective to resolve marital conflicts in all three cases.

In a study, Bahari et al. (2009) explored the effectiveness of self-talk controlling technique training in resolving marital conflicts. Their results showed that self-talk controlling technique training for women was totally (7 subscales) effective in all components except sexual relationship and the increase of individual relationship with their own relatives in women.

Mosayebi Chenarbon et al. (2010) have also proved that cognitive therapy based on self-talk technique was effective in decreasing social phobia.

Dehghani Firoozabadi and Arian (2010) also showed that positive self-talks training was effective in increasing the beliefs of general self-efficacy in women.

Regarding the fact that negative self-talk is hidden in human's daily habits, the main question of this study is that "whether positive inner self-talks training is effective in increasing the happiness of spouses of veterans".

Research methodology

The population, sample and sampling

The present research is a quasi-experimental study with pre-test-post-test design and a control group. Population of this study included all spouses of veterans of Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs of region 2 in Mashhad in the first six months of 2014. From this population, 24 persons were selected by convenience sampling method; then, they were randomly assigned to two groups of 12 persons, the experimental group and control group. The experimental group received 8 sessions of 90 minutes of positive inner self-talks training and the control group did not receive any treatment. Subjects were paired based on age and education.

Research tools

Data collection tool was MUNSH Happiness Questionnaire (The Memorial University of New Found land Scale of Happiness). This scale was designed to measure happiness. By considering different approaches about psychological health and various scales that were created for its measurement, the scale was created by Kozma & Stones (2000). This scale emphasizes on the severity and amount of positive and negative affects. It consists of 24 items. Sub-scales are positive affect (PA), positive experience (PE), negative affect (NA), and negative experience (NE) (Azmonyar Pooya, 2010). Internal reliability of the questionnaire was obtained 71% in Babapour Kheir al-Din et Al.' study (2003). Some researches were done in order to examine the predictive validity for MUNSH Happiness Questionnaire. This test can distinguish normal and psychotic individuals by an accuracy of 76%. Also, it has been observed that this test with other mental health scales such as Judges' Happiness Scale (۰/۵۰) .show its convergent validity.

The Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed by analysis of covariance and multivariate analysis of variance using SPSS software.

Research Findings

In this research which studied the happiness of spouses of veterans, the sample included ٢٤ persons who were randomly assigned to 2 groups of twelve persons including: experimental group and control group. Demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics related to age in experimental group and control group

Group	Number	Age		The smallest	The biggest
		Mean	Standard Deviation		
Experimental	12	49	۴.۳۵	۴۴	۵۸
control	12	۴۶.۱۷	۳.۰۹	۴۳	۵۳

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of similarity scores of both groups' variables in pre-test and post-test stages.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of variables' scores under study in experimental group and control group in pre-test and post-test stages.

	Experimental Group				Control Group			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Positive affect	۵.۷۵	۲.۶۷	۸.۳۳	۱.۳۰	۳.۷۵	۲.۵۳	۴.۰۸	۲.۱۵
Positive experience	۸.۶۷	۲.۴۹	۱۱.۱۷	۲.۹۴	۷.۶۷	۳.۴۹	۷.۰۸	۳.۱۲
Negative affect	۷.۸۳	۳.۴۳	۴.۵۰	۲.۹۴	۷.۰۰	۳.۵۷	۷.۷۵	۲.۷۷
Negative Experience	۷.۱۷	۲.۴۸	۵.۳۳	۳.۰۲	۷.۵۸	۱.۹۸	۷.۲۵	۱.۷۱
Happiness	-۰.۵۳	۸.۹۲	۹.۶۷	۶.۸۷	-۳.۲۵	۹.۶۹	-۳.۸۳	۸.۰۳

As can be seen in Table2, happiness scores of spouses of veterans increased after intervention and positive inner self-talk training in post-test compared to pre-test, while happiness scores of the control group did not have significant difference. Also, Levein's F test showed the homogeneity of variances. Table 3 shows analysis of covariance of the effect of independent variable on dependent variable.

Table 3: Results of analysis of covariance for positive inner self-talk training on happiness of spouses of veterans

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig	Eta	Observed Power
Pre-test effect	۴۹۸.۰۱	۱	۴۹۸.۰۱	۱۰.۴۴	۰.۰۴	۰.۳۳	۰.۸۷

Intervention effect	۱۳۲۰.۳۱	۲	۶۶۰.۱۶	۱۳.۸۴	۰/۰۰۰	۰.۵۷	۰.۹۹
Error	۱۰۰۱.۵۲	۲۷	۴۷.۶۹				
Total	۲۳۲۱.۸۳	۲۹					

The results of applying the statistical method of analysis of covariance for the effect of positive inner self-talk training showed that there is significant difference (at level p< ۰/۰۵) between scores of experimental group and control group after adjusting happiness scores through analysis of covariance. The results of multivariate analysis of covariance of post-test scores of happiness variable for experimental group and control group of spouses of veterans showed that there is a significant effect for therapeutic method factor, after controlling the effect of pre-test using multivariate analysis of covariance. This effect shows that there is significant difference at least between one of the happiness components of spouses of veterans (Table 4).

Table 4: Results of multivariate analysis of covariance for experimental group scores at post-test stage

	Test	**Value**	**F**	**Hypothesis Df**	**Error Df**	**Sig**
Difference of experimental group at post-test with controlling the effect of pre-test	Pillai's Trace	۰.۴۱	۳.۰۷	۴	۱۸.۰۰	۰.۰۴
	Wilks' Lambda	۰.۵۹	۳.۰۷	۴	۱۸.۰۰	۰.۰۴
	Hotelling's Trace	۰.۶۸	۳.۰۷	۴	۱۸.۰۰	۰.۰۴
	Roy's Largest Root	۰.۶۸	۳.۰۷	۴	۱۸.۰۰	۰.۰۴

According to Table 4, after controlling the effect of pre-test through multivariate analysis of covariance, results showed that there is a significant effect for therapeutic method factor. The effect reveals that there is significant difference at least between one of the happiness components of spouses of veterans who received positive inner self-talk training. Results of multivariate analysis of covariance for each happiness component of spouses of veterans are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Results of multivariate analysis of covariance for each happiness component of spouses of veterans

Source		**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**Sig**
Difference of experimental group at post-test with controlling effect of pre-test	Positive affect	۲۷.۳۶	۱	۲۷.۳۶	۵.۰۱	۰.۰۳
	Positive experience	۳۷.۵۹	۱	۳۷.۵۹	۳.۹۲	۰.۰۶
	Negative affect	۷۹.۳۴	۱	۷۹.۳۴	۱۰.۳۸	۰.۰۴
	Negative experience	۱۲.۸۱	۱	۱۲.۸۱	۱.۸۹	۰.۱۸

As shown in Table 5, after controlling the effect of pre-test, f statistics of analysis of covariance for experimental and control group were significant at 0/05 level for positive affect and negative affect, respectively (0/03) and (0/04), while there was no significant difference for positive experience (0/06) and negative experience (0/18) at 0/05 level.

Conclusion:

The aim of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of positive inner self-talks training in increasing the happiness of spouses of veterans. The results showed that there is significant difference between experimental group and control group scores. Thus positive inner self-talks training caused significant increase in happiness scores of the experimental group compared to the control group at post-test stage. Regarding the definition of happiness that was presented by Rieo (2014) who defines it as positive feeling that arises from the sense of satisfaction and success, self-talk constitutes a major part of the affective life because words that are used for describing what has taken place and also individual's feeling about external events, determine the positive or negative affects. Therefore, when the individual views everything positively and seeks goodness in any condition or encounter with any person, he is changed into a positive and optimistic person. Now, since human's quality of life is determined through quality of feeling in every moment, he should learn to only think or talk about whatever he wants and take out of his mind whatever he does not like. According to what was explained, positive inner self-talks training resulted in significant increase in the happiness scores of the experimental group compared to the control group at post-test phase. Also, with positive inner self-talks training, negative or dysfunctional beliefs changed into positive beliefs. These changes arose from the ability to change negative sentences and replace them with positive sentences. These teachings made gradual and step-by-step changes in spouses of veterans. These steps included: to define the concept of self-talk and its effects on individual's life, introduce the positive and negative self-talk, prepare a list of daily negative self-talk sentences, prepare a list of positive self-talk sentences as an alternative, explain the method of replacing positive self-talk sentences through reading loudly in mind and repeating them in three times: morning after waking up, afternoon and night at the time of sleeping, write daily feelings, talk about feelings in the next sessions and analyze them, investigate the effects of replacing negative self-talks by positive self-talk sentences in each session, understand the role of positive inner self-talk in individuals' happiness, and read positive self-talk sentences about happiness. As a result, the experimental group replaced the positive beliefs instead of negative beliefs, understood the positive changes in their happiness, and was able to discharge negative feelings due to the pain of taking care of their veteran spouse. Results of multivariate analysis of covariance for each happiness component of spouses of veterans showed that the experimental group scores were significant in positive and negative affect variables compared to the control group scores. It is clear that negative affect decreased and positive affect increased in the experimental group with positive inner self-talks training. It can be noted that there is a reversed relationship between the decrease of negative affects and the increase of positive affects.

This research is consistent with Hains & Szyjakowski's study (1990) which showed that there is a direct relationship between negative self-talks and anxiety. Also, the results of the present study are consistent with Kazemian (2010), Ismaeeli (2006), Bahari et al. (2009), Mosayebi Chenarbon et al. (2010), and Dehghani Firoozabadi's studies (2010).

The results of multivariate analysis of covariance for each component of happiness of spouses of veterans showed that the effectiveness of positive inner self-talks training was not significant in the increase of positive experience variable and the decrease of negative experience variable. Therefore, positive inner

self-talks training did not increase the positive experience and did not decrease the negative experience in the experimental group compared to the control group in post-test stage. In this field, regarding the fact that positive inner self-talks training had significant effect on positive affect and negative affect, while it had no significant effect on the increase of positive experience and the decrease of negative experience, it can be noted that because this research was carried out in a short term and the effects of negative experiences in spouses of veterans are so deep that these effects of negative experiences are not improved through receiving a short-term training, so they need more time to obtain positive experience and decrease their negative experience. It means that they need to internalize positive affects in a continual and a long time process to obtain positive experiences in their life and change the forms of their life.

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