

The effectiveness of positive psychology interventions with Islamic approach to increase hope in females with multiple sclerosis

Hadis Saeedi^{1*}, Hossein Mousavi Nasab², Ali Mehdi Zadeh Zare Anari³, Hossein Ali Ebrahimi⁴, Mohsen Gorgani Nezhad³, Kouros Divsalar⁵

¹MA in Clinical psychology, Neurology Research Center, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran; Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Kerman Branch, Kerman, Iran

²Assistant Professor of Psychology, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran

³Psychiatrist, Neurology Research Center, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran

⁴Professor, Neurology Research Center, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran

⁵Senior researcher, Neuroscience Research Center, Institute of Neuropharmacology, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran

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***Corresponding author:** Hadis Saeedi, MA in Clinical psychology, Neurology Research Center, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran. Email: saeedi.h88@gmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is one of the common chronic diseases of central nervous system which has an impact on the person's sensory and motor functions. Since definitive and complete treatment of disease symptoms is unavailable in chronic diseases, it is tried to help these patients by psychological supports to accept that they are able to change their view toward disease and enjoy their other abilities as well as invoking the idea that this disease cannot destroy their family life and vitality.

Methods: This quasi-experimental type research had a pretest-posttest design with a control group. In this regard, 40 female patients from members of MS society of Kerman were selected as sample by targeted sampling and then they were placed in two groups of 20 people (experiment and control) through random assignment. Positive psychology with Islamic approach was taught only in experiment group during 7 sessions in 120 minutes. Schneider hope questionnaire was used for data collection. SPSS v. 18 was used for data analysis.

Results: Results showed a significant difference between experiment group in comparison to control group in terms of hope variable ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Based on the findings, positive psychology interventions with Islamic approach increase hope in females with MS.

Keywords: Positive psychology, Islamic approach, Hope, Multiple sclerosis

Introduction

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is one of the common chronic diseases of the central nervous system which has an impact on the person's sensory and motor functions (1). This progressive disease, with an unknown cause and recrudescence and improvement periods, inflicts various physical and mental disorders to people during their life time. In addition, this disorder strongly affects the daily performance, family and social life, functional independence and planning for the future of these patients (2). Although the root causes of this disease is unknown, but it seems that the activation of safety mechanisms against myelin antigens plays a pivotal role in causing this disease (3). So far, more than 2.5 million people around the world have

been afflicted by this disease (4). The most common age for this disease is 20-40 years and according to the results of the researches, the outbreak of this disease has been reported 51.9 people in Tehran and 57.3 people in Kerman per thousand people. Also, its outbreak in women is more than men, 3 to 1 in Kerman (5). People with MS experience psychological outcomes, such as isolation from life, disruption in daily life relationships and activities due to the appearance of disease signs and symptoms, drugs side effects and physical disabilities (6). On account of this, negative emotional feelings pervade in these patients and these feelings are considered to be harbingers of doom. This hopelessness feeling exacerbates their condition and disease (7). Thus, in addition to drug remedies to allevi-



ate the physical symptoms of this disease, psychological interventions are critical in order to increase hope in these patients. In this regard, there are several psychological interventions, but one of the recent interventions is positive psychological intervention. This approach was introduced by Seligman at the end of 1990's and at the beginning of 21 century. From Seligman's viewpoint, the science of psychology during the 20th century was premised upon disorders, such as anxiety, depression, despair and hopelessness and did not consider the human's positive emotions such as optimism, hope and well-being and now it is the time to consider the positive aspects of human thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviors (8). Researches show that optimism and generally positive beliefs have a significant relationship with different dimensions of health as well as playing an important role in preventing physical disorders and increasing hope (9,10). For example, in a study by Lee et al examining the efficacy of a novel psychological intervention on patients with breast and colon cancer, results showed significant higher levels of self-esteem, optimism, and self-efficacy for experimental group compared to the control group (11). Furthermore, in a study by Classen et al (12) on patients with metastatic breast cancer, 64 women were randomized to the intervention group receiving 1 year of weekly supportive-expressive therapy and educational materials in comparison to control group which only received educational materials. The results showed that patients who participated weekly in support meetings with instructions such as expressing emotions and positive experiences and learning how the tumor works had more effective improvements than control group and also a significant greater decline in traumatic stress symptoms was observed (12). On the other hand, in addition to positive beliefs and optimism, religion also has an important role in preventing physical and mental disorders. Thus, religious isolation paves the way for the person's internal and mental conflicts, feeling of emptiness, purposeless, despair and hopelessness (13). Experts believe that religion, the most natural and the first need of human, must be considered in psychotherapy and consultation in addition to mental pathological assessment (14,15). As we live in a society that most of the people are Muslims, we must take into account the Islamic subjects when performing psychological interventions. Therefore, since MS is a progressive disease with an unknown nature with its relapse and remission periods, various physical disorders are experienced by the people in their life time (2). This study aimed to determine the efficacy of positive thinking psychology interventions with Islamic approach to increase hope in women with MS disease in Kerman.

Methods

This quasi-experimental type research had a pretest-post-test design with a control group. After obtaining permission, 40 patients who had the inclusion criteria entered the study. These patients were chosen from the list of patients

with MS by referring to Kerman MS society. We divided the patients into two groups of 20 patients (experiment and control) randomly. The inclusion criteria were women patients with MS in the age range of 20-50 years, having no history of divorce and death of family members in recent 6 months, no psychotic disorders, no use of narcotics and psychotropic drugs, minimum literacy in order to read and filling out the written consent form. The exclusion criteria included the patient's desire not to participate in the research, being illiterate, having a history of divorce or death of family members in recent 6 months, having psychotic disorders and narcotics usage. At first, we distributed Schneider hope (1991) questionnaire (in order to measure hope) in both groups. Then, positive psychology interventions were applied in the experiment group by conducting a supportive group therapy in which a teacher taught relevant materials in 7 sessions for 2 hours. These classes were held twice a week. Conversely, the control group did not receive any intervention. Finally, we reevaluated hope in the two groups (experiment and control) after conducting educational sessions.

Research instruments

Data gathering in this study was provided by researchers after reviewing related texts and obtaining experts' opinions. We combined available tools in the field for study purposes. The most important applied tool for this purpose is as follows:

Schneider hope questionnaire

Schneider (1991) developed a 12-item measure of a respondent's level of hope. In particular, this scale is divided into two subscales: (a) Pathways and (b) Motivation. Each item on the questionnaire is answered using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from Definitely False to Definitely True. In a research which was conducted on 600 girl students in Tehran, the stability of Schneider hope scale was investigated by internal consistency and Cronbach alpha coefficient was obtained at 0.89. There is a strong correlation between hope scale and other scales that measure similar psychological processes. For example, hope scale scores have correlation with Scheier and Carver optimism scale at the rate of 0.50 to 0.60. Furthermore, the scores of this scale have negative correlation with the scores of Beck's depression inventory (16).

Description of the training sessions

As we did not find a resource in which positive psychology interventions were implemented, a comprehensive program was developed regarding positive psychology interventions with Islamic approach by using *religious resources* and *psychological resources* under the supervision of psychologists and experts as follows (Box 1):

Data analysis

In order to analyze data, SPSS version 18 was used. Analy-

Box 1. Description of training sessions

First meeting: Meeting group members with each other, describing the objectives and rules of the course, providing some explanations about the training sessions, orienting the patient to the treatment within positive psy-chotherapy and attention to positive aspects in order to increase self-esteem. Finally, some contents about the Islamic comments were presented.

Second meeting: Attention to thoughts, controlling negative thoughts, and some contents about the Islamic comments were presented.

Third meeting: Attention to positive aspects of others and improving social relationships. Some contents about the Islamic comments were presented.

Fourth meeting: Appreciate of God

Fifth meeting: The positive interpretation of events and problem solving. Some contents about the Islamic comments were presented.

Sixth meeting: Positive expectations about the future and achieving goals. Some contents about the Islamic comments were presented.

Seventh meeting: Reviewing the previous sessions and contents, answering the questions, conducting the post-test and holding the closing ceremony.

sis of covariance (ANCOVA) test was performed for data generation.

Results

The demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

The mean and standard deviation of hope in two groups (experiment and control) are shown in Table 2.

As can be seen from Table 2, there was a difference in the average of post-test scores for hope variable in experiment and control groups. To analyze the significance of these differences and controlling the effect of pre-test, the statistical test of covariance analysis was performed. The premise of using the covariance test, considers being homogenous of variance that holds based on the results of Levin ($P > 0.05$, $F = 0.065$). The results of ANCOVA are presented in Table 3.

As can be seen from Table 3, assuming the control variable as pretest scores, there was a significant difference between hope scores before and after training in the experiment group ($P = 0.001$). Statistical power 1 shows that sample size has been enough.

Discussion

The aim of the present research was to investigate the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions with Islamic approach on hope in females with MS in the city of Kerman. The supportive training sessions were effective in increasing hope in females with MS. The results of the present study are consistent with studies conducted by Classen et al (12), Lee et al (11), Ho et al (17), Wong and Lim (18), and Ebadi et al (19). Based on the findings, it can be noted that skill training sessions are crucial in order to reinforce and improve positive relationship with

self, others and the world. This helps people to know themselves better and recognize their positive experiences. By the same token, they can find out the role of these positive experiences in increasing and promoting respect to themselves. Attention to positive points and past good experiences, increase the probability of the occurrence of more positive impressions from the self and others and this causes the people to be able to accept more responsibilities about their value and achieve a more complete understanding of themselves (20). Thus, this results to an increase in hope. But the fact that the method of positivism with Islamic approach has been effective is not out of mind, because the effectiveness of beliefs on emotions and behaviors is both correlated with the experiences of common sense and cognitive ideas. It has been said in the humans' history that the tensions have not been necessarily destructive for religious people who has found goal and meaning in their life and even can also lead to their growth. In this regard, Pargament and Cummings (21) believe that religion has an important role in reducing life stresses. Because religious beliefs act as a shield against life stresses, they assist people in choosing appropriate and effective coping strategies. Thus, this can increase hope in females with MS. Totally, the findings of this study high-

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of hope scores for both experiment and control groups

Group	Variable	Test	Mean	SD
Experiment	Hope	Pre-test	34.15	2.18
		Post-test	40.50	3.8
Control	Hope	Pre-test	33.95	3.06
		Post-test	33.20	3.17

Table 1. Demographic characteristics in experiment and control groups

Group	Age (y)		Duration of illness (y)		Single/married		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Single	Married	Divorce
Experiment	38.15	8.22	6.75	4.72	3	15	2
Control	36.4	10.87	5.12	3.40	1	15	4

Table 3. The results of ANCOVA test

Source	Some of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P	Eta Squared	Observed power
Pre test	312.13	1	312.13	74.96	0.001	0.67	1
Group	504.24	1	504.24	121.09	0.001	0.76	1
Error	154.06	37	4.16				
Total	55316	40					

light that the use of positive thinking training is effective in increasing hope in females with MS, especially if the training is along with religious contents.

Conclusion

On the whole, according to the results of the present study we can say that training sessions were effective to increasing hope in females with MS. Thus, forming the workshop of positive thinking with Islamic approach for these patients is suggested.

Ethical issues

This study was approved by the Neurology Research Center of Kerman University Of Medical Sciences and supported.

Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to the writing and revision of this paper.

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