

# **Intervention and improvement of personality disorders in couples applying for divorce through dynamic psychotherapy**

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## **Abstract**

*In Iran, we are witnessing a growing number of divorces, and this problem has caused problems for the family foundation and, accordingly, has caused many social harms. This research was conducted with the aim of intervention and improvement of personality disorders in couples applying for divorce through dynamic psychotherapy. The current research was semi-experimental with pre-test, post-test and control group. The statistical population included couples applying for divorce who had referred to the counseling center in 2023 in the city of Mashhad from this community, 30 men and women with mild mental disorders were selected by available sampling and placed in two groups of 15 people, experimental and control. The experimental group was intervened, treated and trained by the therapist by implementing dynamic psychotherapy. The research tools were Milon's personality disorder questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with couples applying for divorce. The results indicated that by intervening in the treatment of couples with personality disorders who were applying for divorce, effective steps can be taken and the divorce rate can be reduced.*

**Keywords:** *Personality disorders, couples, divorce, dynamic psychotherapy.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Experiencing differences and conflicts is one of the characteristics of being human or one of the requirements of existence. In any marriage, a little rain of conflict should happen so that this rain can help them understand the differences or differences in opinions, values, desires, needs and habits that spouses have with each other throughout their lives (Eliora, 2014). Intrinsic and universal needs such as intimacy, social relationships, forgiveness and being loved, trusting, gaining security through the attention and presence of a companion, etc., invites mature people to find a suitable companion, with the exception of a few cases. Others in general (in social relationships) and with one often lifelong partner in particular (in marital relationships) is an innate tendency of all humans (Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 2002). Specialists in the field of family have considered many issues and topics related to family and marriage that can cause the growth or deterioration of married life. Among the most important of these factors, we can mention the couple's personality disorders.

Family is a social institution, organization, group and a small society, which, according to sociologists, constitutes the first cohesive social unit, and one of its most important tasks is to provide social solidarity. During its stages, the foundation of the family may suffer damages and crises, and one of these crises is the issue of divorce. Divorce is considered as a social and family crisis, which in many cases causes family imbalance and breaks the stability of the family and causes the psychological and emotional balance of the family to be broken (Amiri, Ghasemi Nawab, Azad Marzabadi and Jamali, 2016).

Divorce is a phenomenon faced by most countries, especially countries in transition, which is associated with negative psychological and emotional consequences such as depression and anxiety for couples and children (Leopold and Kalmijn, 2016). In other words, divorce is a phenomenon that not only poses a serious threat to the family institution, but also affects the health of the society (Sebara, 2012). Untruths and tricks are revealed, the

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emergence of deep-rooted wrongdoings such as drug abuse, alcoholism, betrayal, aggression and continuous violence, lack of independence and responsibility, as well as the use of unpleasant and ineffective methods to solve problems. And expected differences are one of the most important factors of family disintegration (Mirzaei, 2013). In recent years, the divorce rate has increased in Iran. The Civil Registration Organization of Iran has registered the rate of divorce in urban areas at 84.7% and in rural areas at 15.3%. Before the official divorce takes place, couples experience an emotional divorce. Paul Bohanan (1970) believes that divorce occurs in six stages, and the first stage is emotional divorce. He considers emotional divorce to be the growing tension between husband and wife (quoted by Qamari and Fakour, 2018). Personality is a set of behavioral and emotional traits that surrounds and accompanies a person in his daily life, and the personality of each person can be described according to his traits. Personality traits are considered as a stable way of perception, communication with the environment or thinking about oneself, in other words, personality is a continuous characteristic through which a person adjusts his interaction and adaptation with others and the social environment. Trait-based personality disorder diagnosis system, in addition to personality disorder diagnosis, is very suitable for evaluating any type of personality (not only pathological type). The study of how personality traits are related to pathology has increased in the last few decades and there is a lot of evidence that these two areas are related. Personality traits are important for understanding the characteristics and etiology of mental disorders, including personality disorders, due to their hereditary nature and stability over time. Many researchers have tried to integrate two relatively distinct fields of personality theory and personality disorders (Livesley, 2001; Gamez, Watson, Doblin, 2007). Personality disorders are common and chronic disorders. Its prevalence in the general population is estimated at ten to twenty percent. About half of all psychiatric patients have personality disorders. Since personality disorders are the underlying cause of other psychiatric disorders (such as substance abuse, emotional and suicidal disorders, anxiety disorders, impulse control disorders, and eating disorders), they are of particular importance. Also, these disorders are very significant and investigated in the sense that they interfere with the treatment results of other disorders and increase the rate of disability, diseases and mortality of these people (Kaplan and Sadok, 2014). Patients with personality disorders generally deny having any problems and the symptoms of the disorder are acceptable and acceptable to the ego of these patients. But since the behavior and personality pattern of these patients are annoying and unbearable for the people around them and other people, and they will often be labeled as nerve-wrecking, expectant or parasitic, and especially because their disorder is the basis for suffering from other chronic and severe psychiatric disorders. Kaplan and Sadok, 2014).

People with personality disorder, even though they do not feel suffering from their disorder, create many problems for themselves and others. Among their most important problems is being the basis for other disorders. Some characteristics of these disorders, such as the defense mechanism of reasoning and rational justification, cause the formation and growth of therapeutic resistance in the intervention of other disorders. On the other hand, those suffering from dramatic and narcissistic personality disorder expose those around them to emotional and emotional harm. (Kaplan and Sadok, 2014). Therefore, investigation and research in the field of these disorders is very important.

## **II. Research literature**

Based on the definition of the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), personality disorder is an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates significantly from the expectations of the individual's culture, is pervasive and inflexible, and begins in adolescence or early adulthood. , is stable over time and leads to discomfort or disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Also, according to the definition of ICD-10, personality disorders are long-lasting and deep patterns in behavior, thinking, feeling and interpersonal communication that are significantly far from the norm, and are of sufficient importance to cause personal and social discomfort and confusion. And it usually exists since adolescence or childhood and continues for most of the life (World Health Organization, 1999).

From Freud's point of view, human personality is formed in the first five years of life, and the main factor of a person's efforts and activities in all areas of life is his feeling of failure, which occurs in almost all people at some point in their life (Jamshidi, Meimandi and Kiani, 2020). Freud established personality from the perspective of psychoanalysis by proposing three levels of psychological structure: id, ego and superego. In this way, since birth, the child grows in relation to his primary caregivers, and in these interactions, experiences are formed within him. The nature of these experiences and interactions forms the structures of id, ego, and superego. The id consists of instincts and follows the pleasure principle. Ego is the second part of personality structure in Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

Ego is an intermediate part between id and superego, and with a voluntary and conscious movement, it dominates the other two parts, and its task is to preserve the essence; In this way, it takes the reins of the instinctive desires that arise from the id and saturates what it considers right and suppresses what it deems necessary, and it is a symbol of wisdom and sanity (Hashmi, Khazari and Bahri, 2018). The superego is the punishing system of the psyche and following inflexible, unreasonable and idealistic demands may lead to consequences such as high anxiety, vulnerability to failure, the possibility of depression and suicide (Hasa et al., 2019). One of the

psychotherapeutic approaches based on experimental and short-term evidence is Doanlow's short-term dynamic psychotherapy. This method was invented by Habib Duanlo at McGill University in Canada in the 80s. The theoretical basis of intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) is that attachment trauma in childhood leads to psychological pain and then anger towards the source of attachment. The feeling of unconscious guilt is created in response to the anger towards the main face of the attachment, who at the same time has love for him. And this is also proportional to the severity of injury and anger. This unconscious sin is a very harmful system that acts as a driving force for a person's need to destroy himself and punish himself; That is, it appears in the form of self-harm. Since this anger may have a deadly quality, as a result, there will be an unconscious feeling of mourning in response to the loss (killing) of the primary parental figure. Losses and initial real losses also lead to the intensification of the unconscious mourning feeling (Moradzadeh, Mirzaian and Hassanzadeh, 2019). People who benefit from this treatment are those whose routine defense mechanisms have prevented them from enjoying and understanding the meaning of life. This treatment is very common for those who have problems in their relationships with their parents, children, peers and lovers, and like other treatments Psychodynamics is based on helping the patient to understand that his resentment is the result of his unconscious emotions. Therapists will reveal how the patient's defenses prevent him from living a healthy life. His personal life has happened. This method focuses directly on the patient's experiences that made this treatment difficult at the beginning, takes an active approach that helps the patient experience their deeper feelings, and therapists must identify defenses and keep them away from harming the patient. prevent Intensive dynamic psychotherapy is a combination of experience and reflection, not mere reasoning.

In fact, by neutralizing the patient's defenses and drawing the patient's attention to his body, the therapist reveals emotional symptoms to him, and it is this reflection after experiencing the feeling that leads to change and healing (Johnsontown and Abbas, 2014). Feelings experienced in the here and now with the therapist is a kind of triggering and stimulating event that leads to the release of feelings and memories from the past and allows them to be experienced and resolved, this process sometimes greatly affects flexibility and flow. Adds the patient's unconscious fluid. Sometimes, after experiencing the buried feelings, a flood of images, memories and dreams would attack the patient and reveal the source of the nature of their nuclear conflicts. Therefore, after the treatment, patients should have the ability to be intimate and experience emotions without their morbid reaction. Also, in this treatment process, self-punishment changes to self-care.

### **III. Background of the research:**

In many researches, the relationship between divorce and marital conflicts with depression, anxiety disorders and certain diseases has been proven. Psychologically, problems and conflicts in marital relationships are also extremely stressful (Halford, 2007). He Jung and Nadine (2008) in a study titled marital conflicts, symptoms of depression and marital dysfunction, came to the conclusion that marital disorders and couple dysfunction directly increase depression and functional disorders and affect the physical and mental health of couples. In a research conducted by Muradzadeh Khorasani et al. (2019), performing intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy is a suitable option for increasing mentalization capacity and reducing self-injurious behaviors in people with non-suicidal self-injurious behaviors. Shafiei et al. (2010) during a research entitled the relationship between personality types and psychological injuries of women seeking divorce, found that personality types cause the perception of individual differences in the form of stable patterns of thinking, feeling and behavior. People's personality types can provide patterns for predicting their behavior and anxiety states, and individual differences of people are an important factor that shows why some people cope better than others with environmental conditions and variables and common life and from They have different levels of motivation, satisfaction and mental health. Jarareh and Tale Pasand (2013) investigated the effect of managing tactical defenses in the process of short-term campaign psychotherapy on couples' marital satisfaction and showed that therapeutic interventions in tactical defenses can be effective in increasing marital satisfaction. Mobsem, Delawar, Karami, Sanaei and Shafiabadi (2013) investigated the effectiveness of short-term active psychotherapy on reducing marital conflicts in women. The results of this research showed that marital conflicts and subscales have improved significantly in the pre-test and post-test.

### **IV. Research method:**

The current research was semi-experimental with pre-test, post-test and control group. The statistical population consisted of couples applying for divorce who had referred to Aramesh Counseling Center in Mashhad city in 2023. From this community, 30 men and women with mild mental disorders were selected by available sampling and were placed in two groups of 15 people, experimental and control. The experimental group was intervened, treated and trained by the therapist by implementing dynamic psychotherapy. The couples of the experimental group participated in psychodynamic sessions for 8 sessions and each session was 45 minutes individually. Milon's Personality Disorders Questionnaire was used to evaluate the package's effectiveness.

Psychodynamic intervention protocol for the partial improvement of personality disorders and its effect on couples' relationships: this intervention package is based on the principles of psychodynamic theory and the

necessary interventions for the partial improvement of personality disorders and improving the quality of life and marital satisfaction, on a group of 15 couples with disorders Mild psychosis is implemented and designed in eight sessions.

Table (1) protocol of psychodynamic interventions

Summary of the content of intervention sessions	meeting
Expressing the goals and content of the meetings, establishing a relationship between the couple with personality disorder and the therapist, examining the views of the couple regarding the tension-causing and conflicting behaviors of the couple.	First
Improving empathy and intimacy	Second
Apologizing, being a good listener, creating democracy and giving importance to the opinions of both sides	Third
Retelling sweet memories as well as correct daily interactions	Fourth
Providing feedback to change couples' negative representations of each other, creating a sense of security and trust in couples,	the fifth
Practicing life skills, resilience, identifying feelings, emotions and desires of couples	sixth
Calm down, create conversation	seventh
Explaining the importance of continuing to practice what has been learned in order to build trust and regulate emotions, exchange opinions and summarize	Eighth

**V. Findings:**

Table (2) scores of two test groups before and after psychodynamic treatment of divorce applicants Having personality disorders

Significance level	statistics	standard deviation	Average	group	Variable
0/001	3/470	22/51	43/95	experiment	schizoid
		20/29	29/76	Control	
0/001	2/252	29/64	51/02	experiment	evasive
		28/433	38/55	Control	
0/001	1/226	28/81	73/60	experiment	Depressed
		25/16	63/71	Control	
0/001	0/755	18/97	32/69	experiment	Dependent
		18/62	29/98	Control	
0/001	0/604	17/34	22/71	experiment	dramatic
		15/76	24/62	Control	
0/001	1/019	22/13	42/67	experiment	Selfish
		17/77	50/40	Control	
0/001	1/695	23/10	66/99	experiment	unti social
		26/18	84/31	Control	
0/001	3/568	24/35	36/04	experiment	No more harassment
		18/84	21/15	Control	
0/001	3/268	23/95	55/58	experiment	obsession
		25/43	40/30	Control	
0/001	3/997	19/12	39/78	experiment	pessimist
		20/31	24/75	Control	
0/001	2/88	23/51	39/69	experiment	selfharm
		22/46	27/25	Control	

As it can be seen, the average effectiveness of psychodynamic intervention and treatment on personality disorders, in the post-test stage, compared to the pre-test, had a significant role in reducing the desire for divorce of couples. On the other hand, the relationship between psychodynamics and the treatment of personality disorder and correspondingly reducing the desire for divorce is direct and meaningful. Based on the results listed in the table, it can be described that the intervention and improvement of personality disorders in couples applying for divorce through dynamic psychotherapy is effective. Discussion and conclusion: This research was conducted with the aim of intervention and improvement of personality disorders in couples applying for divorce through dynamic psychotherapy. Divorce is considered as a social and family crisis, which in many cases causes family imbalance and breaks the stability of the family and causes the mental and emotional balance of the family to break. Divorce is a phenomenon that not only poses a serious threat to the family institution, but also affects the health of the society by producing psychological and social damages. Therefore, the necessity of this issue requires to prevent divorce in different ways. One of the factors that cause divorce is the couple's personality disorders, which creates problems and challenges for families in an abnormal and incorrect way. Psychodynamic therapy is one of the ways to treat and partially improve couples' personality disorders, which can be the basis of helping the patient to understand that resentment is the result of his unconscious feelings. The therapists will reveal how the patient's defenses prevent him from living a healthy life. The goal of treatment is to establish a connection. Between the patient's current problems and painful events that have occurred throughout his individual life. This method focuses directly on the patient's experiences that made this treatment difficult at the beginning, takes an

active approach that helps the patient experience their deeper feelings, and therapists must identify defenses and keep them away from harming the patient. Intensive dynamic psychotherapy is a combination of experience and reflection, not mere reasoning. In fact, by neutralizing the patient's defenses and drawing the patient's attention to his body, the therapist reveals emotional symptoms to him, and it is this reflection after experiencing the feeling that leads to change and healing. The emphasis of the psychotherapy of the stuffed scheme is to help the patient with the experience of the lack of emotions that the abnormal emergency can be traced back to the abnormalities, and the abstract of the absence of abnormalities. Considering the meaningful relationship of dynamic psychotherapy and its direct and positive effect with personality disorders and correspondingly reducing the desire of couples to divorce, it can be said that by intervening in the treatment of couples with personality disorders who were applying for divorce, effective steps were taken and the divorce statistics reduced.

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