Research Article

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The Efficiency of a Group Counselling Program Based on a Problem-Solving Strategy in Reducing Psychological Stress Among Adolescent Girls of Divorced Families

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Abstract

This study aimed to reveal the effect of a group counseling program based on a problem-solving strategy in reducing psychological stress among adolescent girls from divorced families. The study sample consisted of (30) students from children of divorced families, in the age group (13-16) years, enrolled in one of the public schools in Zarqa in the second semester 2018/2019. To achieve the objectives of the study, a quasi-experimental design was adopted, in which the sample was divided into two groups: an experimental group ($n = 15$), that was exposed to the counseling program, and a control group ($n = 15$) for whom the program was not presented. Both groups underwent a total of two sessions per week, in which the session duration ranged between (45-60) minutes. The results of the current study indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the average performance of the members of the experimental and control groups on the psychological stress test in its psychological, cognitive, and physiological dimensions in favor of the experimental group. This indicates the program's efficiency in reducing psychological stresses. The study recommended developing more group counseling programs to address psychological, personal, social, and behavioral issues among adolescent girls and boys from divorced families.

Keywords: Group counseling, problem-solving strategy, psychological stresses, adolescent girls from divorced families

1. Introduction

Divorce is a negative social phenomenon that is harmful to family life, by which children suffer from multiple problems that hinder their psychological and social adaptation. Although divorce is the last link in a series of family problems, children's suffering does not end when it occurs, as divorce is considered one of the most important life events that cause psychological and social stress ((Smith,

1999).

Divorce is a stressful event for children, due to the change in the social environment that follows, and difficulty in psychosocial communication with parents after the divorce. children may need a long time to adapt and return to a normal life. Consequently, they are vulnerable to emotional distraction, which exposes them to stress, and behavioral problems. Furstenberge and Kierman (2001) indicated that children in their adolescence stage suffer from psychological stress, due to their feeling of loneliness, loss, insecurity, and a lack of real family belonging because of losing one or both parents.

In a study conducted by Amato (2000), the findings from more than ninety-two studies on the children of divorced women confirmed that these children are exposed to various forms of anti-social behavior, delinquency, school failure, poor achievement, and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and aggressive behavior. The researchers attributed this to psychological stresses resulting from parents' divorce, although all the aforementioned manifestations of behavior did not reach the stage of actual turmoil except for a specific proportion of adolescents, but it indicates the amount of psychological stress suffered by children because of parents' divorce. Especially if children are in their adolescence stage, studies indicated that adolescents of divorced parents are anxious about the future and the inability to concentrate at school; adolescent girls feel insecure towards the opposite sex, and children are exposed to depression, low self-concept and they are more likely to be delinquent due to the absence of the father, and the mother's preoccupation with following her children. They are also more likely to drop out of school, frequent absences, and low academic achievement due to mental distraction, their inability to concentrate, and suffering from a lack of social relations and isolation.

1.1 *Psychological stress and its relationship to divorce*

The topic of stress and its impact on an individual's life has received the attention of many social and psychological researchers. This is due to the fact that we live in an era that is rich in political conflicts, economic problems, and social and cultural changes in addition to the interconnected environmental and personal barriers that prevent the fulfillment of the biological and psychological needs of the individual, in addition to technological developments that require close follow-up of the changes taking place, and generate competition among people; all of this would raise the levels of anxiety and tension in the individual, and makes him suffer from psychological and emotional disorders (Radwan, 2010).

Psychological stress arises as a result of the individual's interaction with the environment in which he adapts or interacts with many demands and challenges that require the individual to respond to them, and this causes the presence of a state of anxiety, depression and anger.

Divorce is considered one of the most stressful life events for parents and children, as it may often lead to psychological disturbances in children, with serious problems such as loss of love, care and attention by a non-guardian parent, a low standard of living and a change in the environment; all of this constitutes psychological stress on children, especially in adolescence, due to the problems and difficulties that affect the mental adjustment of a person, if he does not find the appropriate care and guidance in the shadow of a normal family, then it is a delicate and decisive stage in his life. And this needs a deep understanding of the adolescent's developmental, psychological, social and emotional needs. (Melhem, 2004)

Facing these stresses, individuals use different adaptive skills, some of which are based on reducing stress, some of them are dealing with the problem that is the subject of stress, and others deal with the cognitive aspects related to assessing the source of stress or evaluating the resources available to face it. The individual in the face of his problems contributes to his adjustment and his mental health, to the point that the type of adaptation a person uses determines to a large extent the level of social support that he can get (Meichenbum, 1995). Adaptive skills are mostly learned skills that can be trained on, and perhaps the primary goal of the school counselor is to help students learn appropriate adaptive skills to deal with the stressors they face (Hampel & Petermann, 2005).

A school counselor can use group counseling programs to relieve stress, improve mental health and adapt to life (Abu Asaad, 2011). Group counseling is defined as a dynamic process among people that helps in modifying behavior, it's a form of counseling that targets a group of counselors whose problems and disorders are similar together in small groups, whose members range from (3-15) with the aim of helping mentors to face obstacles that hinder their growth wherever they exist, and to achieve the maximum growth of their personal potential. Group counseling has proven its efficiency on mentors who suffer from psychological problems (Corey, 2001)

The problem-solving method plays an important role, especially with chronic stress, and the problem-solving method has proven its efficiency in treating various problems such as depression, fear, anxiety, and psychological stress. Individuals who suffer from these problems face daily major challenges in their lives. The skill of problem solving is directly related to the poor level of adaptation and the performance of its functions.

Hence, the development of an individual's problem-solving efficiency gives an indication of the individual's successful adaptation and performance of his tasks during stressful situations. Problem-solving skill can be used to help deal with stressful situations related to divorce (Cotter, et al., 2000).

The study of Alaa El-Din and Abdel-Rahman (2011) points to the importance of problem-solving training, as it is part of the main social skills that help in dealing with problems and finding solutions when they are faced, and this process proceeds through the following steps: Recognition and awareness of the problem, Defining the problem, suggesting possible solutions, choosing a solution and the implementation.

The use of problem-solving method has proven effective in dealing with many problems among individuals, such as its study by Zorai (1992), where a program of training in problem-solving skills was used in reducing psychological tension among tenth grade students in Amman, Jordan.

The study of Haddad and Dahadhah (1998) indicated the efficiency of a group counseling program in training problem solving and muscle relaxation in stressing tension for thirty students with the seventh and eighth grade in a school in Amman. As well as the study of Zeriki (2000), which indicated the efficiency of using training in problem-solving skills in relieving psychological stress and raising self-esteem among adolescents in Amman.

There are also many studies that indicated the efficiency of using group counseling with the children of divorced women, such as the study of Fawcett, (2000), which proved the efficiency of a group counseling program in reducing the level of aggression among adolescents of children of divorced families at the age of (12-18) Year; it reduced the level of aggression and anger among the participants.

Aladdin (2014) conducted a study on the effect of group counseling based on the model of the interventionist program for children of divorce, on improving the mental health of a group of adolescent students in Jordan, and the results indicated the efficiency of the program in reducing anxiety and depression, but there were no statistically significant differences between experimental and controlling group in self-concept.

1.2 Research problem

Studies indicate that the percentage of children of divorce families who reported that they have psychological and emotional stresses that negatively affect their academic achievement and social efficiency during the past decade has increased dramatically (Oman et al., 2008).

Dealing with psychological stresses requires training the children of divorced parents on methods and strategies to face those stresses, and the current study uses training on using problem-solving method, which aims to teach individuals the necessary responses to solve the problems they face, and provides them with feedback, and includes training on identifying the problem, setting goals, and generating alternatives.

Due to the scarcity of Arab studies that dealt with the training of children of divorced people, the current study is concerned with the issue of divorce, which is considered a fundamental topic in

family counseling, and several studies revolve around it. Likewise, there is a dearth of Arab studies that have dealt with this category within extension programs. The current study aims to investigate the effect of training on problem-solving in reducing psychological stress among divorced children.

More specifically, the current study sought to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of a group counseling program based on problem-solving method in relieving psychological stress among children of divorced families?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

There are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the average scores of the members of the experimental group and the control group on the psychological stress scale with its three dimensions in the post-measurement (total and sub-score)

1.4 Research significance

The importance of this study can be shown through the following: The scarcity of studies that have focused on the subject of study according to the researchers' knowledge. Indeed, despite the conduct of many studies and field research that dealt with the impact of divorce on children, there is a dearth of research that dealt with designing group counseling programs based on problem-solving method in relieving Psychological stresses among adolescents from children of divorced families.

1.5 Research limitations

The possibility of generalizing the results of this study is determined according to the demographic and social characteristics of adolescents who are children of divorced parents enrolled in a Zarqa school. And according to its quality, the characteristics of the study tools and their used standards, and the validity and reliability achieved by them.

1.6 Research Terminologies

Training in solving problems: It can be defined as providing the individual with a general adaptive skill in problem-solving that enables him to deal with a wide range of problems using a group counseling program and is procedurally known as the program that was prepared for the purposes of this study (Miqdadi, 2010).

The problem-solving method in this study consists of five stages:

General orientation, problem definition, generation of alternatives, decision-making, and verification of results (Abu Zayton; Banat, 2010)

Group counseling program is known as a wide and continuous practice in providing assistance, through a number of skills to a group of individuals, as this assistance is provided by a specialized and trained person, and helps them to achieve mutual goals, which can be personal or interpersonal or dependent on the acquisition of certain skills (Corey, 2001).

Adolescents are the children of divorced women: they mean in the current study female students whose parents have been officially separated by divorce for a period of not less than one year and not exceeding five years. Those who fall within the age group (13-16) years, which represent the stage of adolescence, are enrolled in one of the public schools in Zarqa, Jordan.

Psychological stress: These are stressful situations or events that an individual is exposed to and lead to improper adaptation to any of the demands of change, and that the response to stresses varies from one individual to another, and from time to time for the same individual, and this indicates the individual nature of the stresses. (Broom, 1995, p62)

For the purposes of this study, psychological stress is defined as the degree obtained by the study sample on the psychological stress scale used in this study.

2. Study Methodology and Procedures

In this study, a quasi-experimental design was used, which is represented in the presence of an experimental treatment, which is the group counseling program based on a problem-solving method and a dependent variable, which is the level of psychological stress among adolescent girls of divorced families.

2.1 Study sample

The study sample consisted of (30) female students from divorced families, whose ages range between (13-16) years, who are enrolled in regular studies in the upper elementary stage classes for the second semester of the year (2018/2019), at Zainab Al Hilaliyah School affiliated with the First Zarqa governorate. The study individuals were selected according to the intentional sample method in which the following condition is met to participate in the study, which is that the sample is from families in which a divorce occurred within five years, and that their scores on the psychological stress scale indicate the presence of a problem that requires a guiding intervention, and the consent of the parent and the student to participate in the study. Where the sample was divided into two groups (n = 15) female students, who are the control and not exposed to any instructional intervention, and the second group (n = 15) female students, which is the experimental (subjected to the instructional intervention).

2.2 Instruments

Psychological Stress Scale: We used the psychological stress scale developed by Bahjat Abu Suleiman (2002), which consists of (41) items. The items are divided into the following dimensions:

The physiological dimension represented by the items: 1,4,5,8,9,14,15,19,23,27,32,35

The cognitive dimension represented by the items: 2,6,10,17,21,25,29,31,37

The psychological dimension represented by the items: 3,7,11,12,13,16,18,20,22,24,26,28,30,33

Abu Soliman (2002) extracted the logical validity of the scale, by presenting it to ten arbitrators who are specialists in educational measurement, counseling, and mental health, to judge their suitability for the age group, clarity of language, and its representation of the scale dimensions, and the comments of the arbitrators were positive.

Moreover, (Abu Sulaiman, 2002) calculated the scale stability factor by test-retest method, by applying the scale and then re-applying it two weeks after the first time on his sample consisting of (30) students. The coefficient of stability reached the total score (0.89), while the physiological dimension was (0.83), the cognitive dimension (0.80), and the psychological dimension (0.87).

In the current study, the researchers extracted the stability of the scale by the method of internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) for the scale completely if it reached (0.81). The validity of the scale was also verified by presenting it to ten referees from professors of counseling and psychology in Jordanian universities, and the observations referred to by the arbitrators were taken into account. Which related to the linguistic formulation of a number of paragraphs and thus the study tool is reliable and applicable for the purposes of the current study.

2.3 Group counseling program:

The group counseling program used in the current study was based on training on a problem-solving technique, which is one of the techniques of cognitive behavioral therapy, which was applied to the female students of the study (n = 15) who are members of the experimental group only, and the group counseling program consisted of (11) One session, which was distributed over (5) weeks, at a rate of two sessions per week, and the duration of the session ranged from (45-60) minutes.

The logical validity of the group counseling program used in the study was verified by

presenting it to (10) arbitrators who hold a doctorate in the field of counseling, mental health and psychology from Jordanian universities, to determine its suitability for the goals for which it was prepared. The program is suitable with some modifications. And then implementing the program after making the required adjustments, and the pilot program included acquaintance and definition of the indicative program, recognition and awareness of the problem, defining the problem and defining it, proposing possible solutions, choosing one of the solutions, implementation, evaluation, post-measurement, and feedback. It includes sessions, activities, and homework.

2.4 Study variables

The study included the following variables:

1. The experimental treatment: the group counseling program based on training on problem solving.
2. The dependent variable: the level of psychological stress of the study members represented by the degrees of the sample members on the psychological stress scale.

2.5 Data Analysis

In order to reach the study individuals and the results of the study and verify their hypotheses, mean and standard deviation were extracted using descriptive analysis and the use of a test for two independent samples in order to compare the members of the experimental and control groups in the pre and post measurements, and MANCOVA was used in the measurement Pre and post, by entering the study data into the computer, then processing it and analyzing it statistically using the statistical software package for social sciences (spss).

3. Research findings

To answer the question of the current study: What is the effect of a group counseling program based on problem-solving method in relieving psychological stress among girls of divorced families? The arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample degree were extracted on the psychological stress scale according to the variable of the experimental and control group, and Table (1) illustrates that:

Table 1: The arithmetic means, standard deviations of the study sample scores on the psychological stress scale according to the group variable

	Group	pre		post		average	Standard error
		arithmetic mean	standard deviation	arithmetic mean	standard deviation		
Total psychological stresses	experimental	108.13	3.833	51.12	2.850	51.131	1.152
	controlling	108.20	8.108	56.40	5.527	56.402	1.152
	total	108.17	6.232	53.77	5.082	53.767	0.814
physiological	experimental	31.33	1.397	14.27	1.223	14.230	0.322
	controlling	31.47	2.100	15.33	1.291	15.370	0.322
	total	31.40	1.754	14.80	1.349	14.800	0.227
psychological	experimental	53.27	2.017	24.73	2.282	25.647	0.776
	controlling	53.33	4.220	29.47	3.482	28.553	0.776
	total	53.30	3.250	27.10	3.209	27.100	0.546
cognitive	experimental	24.53	1.187	10.13	1.356	11.148	0.411
	controlling	24.46	2.063	13.60	1.682	12.585	0.411
	total	24.47	1.655	11.87	1.676	11.867	0.289

Table (1) shows the existence of apparent differences in the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and the adjusted averages of the study subjects' scores on the psychological stress scale. And to demonstrate the significance of the statistical differences between the arithmetic means, then use the analysis of multiple variance. (MANCOVA) Table (2) illustrates this:

Table 2: Results of multiple concomitant analysis of variance (MANCOVA) to measure psychological stresses depending on the group variable.

effect	Hoteling	F value	Virtual degrees of freedom		Statistical significance	Eta square (η^2)
group	0.551	3.458	3	23	0.033	0.311

Table (2) shows that Hoteling's Trace has a value of (0.551), and this value is relatively moderate, which indicates the possibility of differences between the arithmetic means for measuring psychological stress in the experimental and control groups, where the calculated value of "q" indicates The (3,458) indicates the existence of these differences because the significance value (0.033) was less than the level (0.05) with degrees of freedom (23,3), and the value of the ETA square (2) indicates the amount of the effect of using the pilot program, as it reached the effective effect for the program on this variable.

To examine the effect of the counseling program and the sub-dimensions of the psychological stress scale, the results of the accompanying One way ANcova analysis were calculated. Table (3) shows the results:

Table 3: Analysis of variance associated with the group effect on the stress scale dimensions.

Source of variance	level	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	F value	Statistical significance	Effect size (η^2)
physiological pre cognitive pre Psychological pre	physiological post	5.473	1	5.473	0.071	0.124
	cognitive post	0.806	1	0.806	0.576	0.013
	Psychological post	3.3666	1	3.366	0.454	0.015
Total	physiological post	9.587	1	6.224	0.020	0.199
	cognitive	15.225	1	6.069	0.021	0.195
	post physiological	62.218	1	6.946	0.014	0.217
Error	physiological post	38.512	25			
	post cognitive	62.714	25			
	post physiological	223.937	25			
Total	physiological post	52.800	29			
	cognitive	81.467	29			
	post physiological	298.700	29			

Table (3) showed that there were statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) due to the group's effect in all dimensions in favor of the experimental group.

4. Discussion

The current study sought to investigate the effect of a group counseling program based on a problem-solving method in relieving psychological stress on a sample of adolescent students whose ages ranged from (13-16) years from a school in Zarqa, Jordan.

The results of the study indicated that there were statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the post measurement between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group that participated in the extension program. These results indicate that the group counseling program designed by researchers for the purposes of the current study and which was

based on the problem-solving method has been proven effective in reducing the level of psychological stress in its three dimensions among the members of the experimental group.

These positive results are consistent with the results from other studies (Aladdin, 2014; Fawce, 2000; Mawaslah, 2020). The results of this study also agree with the findings of some studies that used problem-solving method in dealing with many problems of individuals, such as the study (Zoudai, 1992), the study (Haddad and Dhadhah, 1998) and the study (Maali, 2003).

Among the reasons that made the program so effective was the method used to implement the program collectively, which provided the opportunity for students in the experimental group to express their feelings freely, and to obtain various solutions to the problems they raise during group discussions. In group sessions, opportunities are provided for interaction and dialogue, so that the student realizes that she is not the only one who suffers from psychological stresses and parental divorce.

In addition, the students' commitment to attend the counseling program sessions on time, their interaction during group discussions, and the implementation of homework, contributed to their benefit from the counseling program. Thus reducing the level of psychological stress they have.

The results can be explained by the fact that the skill of solving emergency problems has given the students the ability to deal with disturbing situations and painful feelings in emergency situations after the parents' divorce, which led to an improvement in their ability to manage stressful situations and increased their ability to self-control, and that these skills were really effective and had a positive impact on the participants, as this information came to answer the questions and doubts that revolve in their minds about what makes them unable to deal efficiently with their problems after the divorce between their parents.

This positive result among the members of the experimental group, and the effect of the group counseling program in reducing psychological stresses among the members of the experimental group, can also be explained as being due to several factors related to the processes of group counseling, which he called Yalom (1995), therapeutic processes and transparency (curatives factors). Such as processes of self-disclosure and feedback, concern, acceptance, feelings of strength, catharsis and hope, especially since hope reflects the belief that change is possible, and is a remedy in itself, because it gives members the confidence that they have the strength to choose to be different (Corey & Corey, 1997, P248) In addition, it seems that the problem-solving skill helped these students to deal with the issues that were related to the life difficulties they face inside the school or in their homes due to the nature of the family problem that they are going through, so they became able to control themselves, and they gained self-confidence, positive acceptance and were able to create Safe relationships and cohesion in the face of the difficulties they face by taking advantage of some of their own or environmental advantages.

It was also observed during the work of the experimental group that the clear effect of the reciprocal interactions and this group progressed gradually through stages in its development, and that was reflected during the participants' performance of some of the training activities included in the program, the most important of which was talking about life experiences related to the problems they face as a result of parents' divorce, whether inside the school or Current family after divorce.

As a whole, this result confirms that the group counseling method presented in the form of a small number of indicative group is considered one of the successful options in increasing the efficiency of dealing with difficult circumstances and benefiting from the personal and environmental resources.

5. Conclusions

In view of the findings, the researchers recommend conducting a study to examine the efficiency of designing and experimenting with a group counseling program aimed at reducing the difficulties faced by female students in the stage of adolescence in divorced families, with the participation of teachers and counselors working in schools. This is in a treatment plan based on the interactive

processes that take place in the classroom and inside the school.

Moreover, it recommended to conduct more studies dealing with personal, psychological, social, and behavioral problems of divorced adolescents, and developing treatment programs based on cognitive behavioral theory and other theories that have proven their efficiency and positive effects on the guided.

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