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## Effectiveness of Stress Management on Mental Health of Divorced Women

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### Abstract

Psychological interventions may improve the Mental health in divorced Women. This study is aimed to assess the efficacy of cognitive behavioral stress management (CBSM) group education on improvement of mental health of divorced women. This study is a quasi-experimental design with pre-post test and follow-up stages. The sample consisted of 42 divorced women selected and were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups (n=21). The experimental group administered 8 sessions of stress management 2 hours weekly. After the intervention, scores in the experimental group showed significantly higher increase when compared with that of the control group ( $P < 0.05$ ). So these results indicated that stress management is considered as an important part of the treatment.

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### 1. Introduction

Stress is a multidimensional phenomenon which is focused on dynamic relationship between the individual and the environment. It should be noted that some degree of stress can be effective on increasing and improving individuals' performance. Evidences indicate that most of the human successes are created in stressful conditions, but high rate of stress would followed by numerous consequences, including mental and physical illnesses, sleep disorders, restlessness, irritability, forgetfulness, abnormal fatigue, reduced individual's resistance and recurrent infections, headaches, poor concentration, memory impairment and reduce in problem solving ability (Beddoe & Murphy, 2004). In general, everyone experiences the stress, but divorced women are a group of people who are at the higher risk of stresses due to the nature of the their life, because they need to adjust themselves with the life environment which requires compliance with new social norms and new friendship. They should also meet the needs of family, environment, friends and other groups which, in most of the cases, influenced by the family and the culture they have been belonged to (Taghavi, Ramezani, Khatoni & Monjamed, 2007). Studies indicated divorced

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women experience many stressor agents (Taghavi, Ramezani, Khatoni & Monjamed, 2007). Divorced women are influenced by the various stressor. Life's divorced women are considered as one of the most stressful environments, because there is difficult situations in it (Abazari, Abaszadeh & Arab, 2004).

Stress can cause mental and physical illnesses, dysfunction and adjustment disorder and ultimately reduction of divorced women's mental health (Gammon, Morgan-Samuel, 2005., Ryan, 2000). So that in 2006, Assadi, Nakhaei, Najafi & Fazel (2007) in their study found that psychological problems were more prevalent among divorced women. Studies indicated that the prevalence and severity of mental and psychological problems have been increased in divorce women compared to the older population. According to the reports of the National Institute of Mental Health, recent study results in the Wolfson Health Sciences Institute of London indicated that 59 percent of the divorced women suffered from depression and anxiety and other disorders. The consultants of the mentioned institute had reported the increase rate of referred divorced women to the consultant centers from 2.4 per 100 divorced women in 1995 to 9.7 in 2000 (World Health Organization, 2005). In the study of Ebrahimian (2004) on 113 divorced women indicated that 57.5% of divorced women suffered from various degrees of depression. In reviewing stress and its consequences, in the stress coping strategies, the method of response to it would be more important than the nature of stress itself. The most appropriate method used in coping with stress, the less she would be damaged (Akochehian, Rohafza, Hasanzadeh & Mohammad Shrif, 2008). Stress coping skills have a comprehensive concept and multiple cognitive behavioral components. Generally Cognitive-behavioral coping strategies are the most effective methods to reduce the stress (Kaviani, Pournaseh, Sayadlou & Mohammadi, 2007).

Stress management practices include: yoga relaxation, progressive muscle relaxation, breathing exercises, meditation and mental imagery (Daubenmier et al, 2007). There have been done many studies about the effectiveness of stress management training on anxiety, depression and stress rate. So that Mehrabi, Fati, Davazdah Emami & Rajab (2009) in their study had reviewed the effectiveness of this approach on emotional problems of the diabetic patients and have found that stress management training can be helpful as a comprehensive diabetes care.

Researches indicated that stress management was associated with reduction of the depression (Daubenmier et al, 2007) and anxiety symptoms (Kaviani, Pournaseh, Sayadlou & Mohammadi, 2007). Kang, Choi & Ryu (2009) also in his study titled as "the effectiveness of a stress coping program based on mindfulness meditation on the stress, anxiety, and depression experienced by divorced women in Korea" showed that the above approach could be effective in reduction of the stress and anxiety of the divorced women (Kang, Choi & Ryu, 2009). The effectiveness of stress management training on mental health of divorced women was investigated; the results showed that stress management training could result in progression in mental health (Soltani, Aminoroaya & Atari, 2008). Considering the wide use of stress management training program for emotional problems and various diseases and also low rate of mental health in divorced women, the studied researches on this group have been descriptive. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct a study as reviewing the effectiveness of stress management training program on mental health of divorced women in dargaz city in 2011.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants and procedures**

The study population included all divorced women who were living in a dargaz city in 2010-2011 and referred to the clinic. 42 divorced women selected with low level of mental health on general health inventory (GHQ) and clinical interview and were randomly assigned to two groups and based on the odd and even numbers. The first group (n=21) trained stress management training program and a second group (n = 21) did not receive training. The groups were heterogeneous for age, education, duration of divorce. Participants in pre-post test and follow up (9 months) stages completed the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). This program was a compound of cognitive-behavioral techniques which merged with cognitive-behavioral stress management method as stress management intervention. This program had the intervention which was 8 sessions, twice a week, that each session was two hours. The

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