

Enhancement of adjustment among divorcees through positive therapy

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The purpose of the study was to identify the level of adjustment among divorcees and enhancing it through Positive Therapy, a behaviour modification technique. The sample consisted of 40 divorcees. Out of these, 20 were female and 20 male. To measure their level of adjustment, Global Adjustment Scale (Vohra, 1994) was used. The results indicated that there was good adjustment especially in the areas of emotion and social spheres in male divorcees and also indicated that the areas of adjustment in females seem more promising than that of the males after intervention. Thus, positive therapy was very effective in enhancing the adjustment among divorcees.

Keywords: enhancement adjustment divorcees positive therapy

Families are unique social systems in which the membership is based on combinations of biological, legal, affectional, geographic and historical ties. It is bound by its own rules and intricacies. Marriage is the first step in making a family and it is the oldest and most sanctimonious institution, the avowal of which has to be treated with respect and reverence. However, in the modern fast changing world, these ties seem to be unraveling. The sacred vows, on which, marriages are built are rapidly fading into sacrilegious violations and a lot of marriages end in divorce (Subramanian, 2001).

The term divorce is used to refer to the dissolution of a marriage between a husband and wife. Divorce takes place before a biological termination of marriage, that is, death of a spouse. Divorce is a legal action (Gac, 2010).

Divorce, as an institution, has been permitted in most ages and countries for certain reasons. It has never been intended to produce an alternative to the monogamic family but merely to mitigate hardships, where, for special reasons, the continuance of marriage ties was felt to be intolerable" (Roy, 1999).

The institution of divorce exists from the time immemorial in various forms and in various ages. Not all marriages fail for the same reason. Nor is there usually one reason for the breakdown of a particular marriage. Nevertheless, some reasons are quoted more often than others. They are poor communication, financial problems, a lack of commitment to the marriage, a dramatic change in priorities, infidelity, failed expectations or unmet needs, addiction and substance abuse, dowry, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, lack of conflict resolution, etc.

Living in the modern world is tough enough without the heartbreak, insecurity and the trauma of splitting from one's spouse. Divorce adds a multitude of worries to an already hectic life and the awkwardness or embarrassment of having to explain to everybody that the marriage is no more causes distress (Cottrill, 2000).

The effects of divorce are far reaching and diverse. They can be positive such as propelling the individual to seek her or his own identity. In other cases, it can be negative such as behavioural

disorder issues of maladjustment, panic disorders and anti-social patterns (Walsh, 2007).

Amota (2000), in his study showed that, if divorce is a 'normal' experience as proposed, then divorce adjustment should assimilate normative values as well. As normative values are supported through social approval, divorce adjustment should also be supported through expressions of social approval such as social sanctions communicated by close friends, 'intergenerational transmission' by parents and self-regulating norms.

"Adjustment is a process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its need and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs" (Srivastava, 1995).

Adjustment after divorce varies from one person to the next, with the goals of the adjustment process being the same: a) To accept the fact of divorce and one's fate as a single, divorced person and b) To establish an autonomous, independent life-style that is free of the constraints imposed by the previous marriage relationship (Rice, 1993). Divorce radically alters the structure of the family. It forces parents to drastically adjust their parenting roles and embroils extended family members in a battle to reaffirm loyalties and realign alliances (Craig, 2000).

Dawson's (1994) study revealed that lack of communication is the number one reason for most marriages ending in divorce. Giggy and Kelly (1992) conducted a study to find out the perceived main causes for divorce among men and women. Poor communication, basic unhappiness, loss of love, incompatibility, infidelity, mental illness, emotional problems, conflict over men and women's role and spouse's personality traits were seen as the main reasons for divorce.

Divorce is a painful loss that involves a grief process. Men are not likely to be in touch with feelings the same way as women. Men commonly don't reveal their distress to others. They are not inclined to reach out for support and feel they should control their emotions. They are more likely to be at risk for suicide after divorce especially when they have to adjust in not seeing their children (Bishop, 2010).

Wallerstein (2000) revealed that men and women tend to remain intensely angry with the former spouse for many years after the breakup. It also shows that family members continue to engage in

escalating cycles of conflict and coercion long after the marriage is over and the family has split up.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- i) To identify the causes of divorce
- ii) To assess the level of adjustment of the divorcees
- iii) To help the divorcees cope up with their life using Positive Therapy

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 40 divorcees (20 male and 20 female) who obtained divorce from District Family Court, Coimbatore. The divorcees were in the age range of 20-50 years. The data was collected through observation, interview, case study method and Global Adjustment Scale, a psychological inventory.

Instruments

Case Study Schedule (Natesan, 2003) and Global Adjustment Scale (Sanjay Vohra, 1994) were used.

Procedure

From Coimbatore, District Family Court was selected for the conduct of the study, 20 male and 20 female who have obtained divorce were selected for this study. The age of the sample ranged from 20 to 50 years. Observation, interview, case study method and Global Adjustment Scale were used to collect the data from the sample.

A Case Study Schedule (Natesan, 2003) was used to obtain information from the sample individually. The information obtained includes the personal history, family background, causes and effects of divorce.

Global Adjustment Scale was administered on the entire sample (N = 70) to assess their level of adjustment in 6 areas health, emotion, occupation, sex, family and social.

All the subjects were given psychological intervention called

positive therapy. A package evolved by Natesan (2002). It is a type of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. It has four stages:

- Relaxation Therapy
- Counselling
- Exercise and
- Behavioural Assignments

Relaxation Therapy

One cannot be tensed and relaxed at the same time. In the counselling sessions; subjects respond better to therapy, when they are in a relaxed state. Hence, relaxation therapy was given as the first strategy in positive therapy.

Relaxation therapy involved three steps:

- Deep Breathing Practice
- Relaxation Training and
- Autosuggestion

Counselling

In Positive Therapy, Counselling involves the following techniques:

- Rational Emotive Therapy
- Thought Stopping
- Cognitive Restructuring and
- Assertiveness Training

In the present study, Cognitive restructuring techniques were used.

Exercises

The following exercises were given to the subjects to help them get rid off their tension and develop a cheerful state:

- Tension Releasing Exercise
- Smile Therapy

Duration of Therapy

Positive Therapy was given for one hour per session. Ten sessions were given, over a period of six weeks. After six weeks, all the subjects were retested using "Global Adjustment Scale".

Table I: Causes Of Divorce

S.No Causes	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1 Lack of communication	9	45	4	20	13	33
2 Unsatisfactory sex life	6	30	6	30	12	30
3 Lack of issues	7	35	4	20	11	28
4 Emotional immaturity	4	20	3	15	7	18
5 Impotency	4	20	2	10	6	15
6 Physical Abuse	-	-	5	25	5	13

N: Number %: Percentage

The causes of divorce are varied, depending upon the individual characteristics of a person and also the environment, both physical and interpersonal, in which the subject is. Marriage is an institution that most people enter into jointly with expectations (Obetzinski, 1999). Having entered, it is not a smooth sail, as communication is

either lacking or not sufficient in bringing about an understanding between husband and wife, which causes a separation in relationship. This is clearly evident from Table I. Greater percentage of male divorcees reported lack of communication than females. Sex life is also another important cause with equal number of male and female divorcees reporting unsatisfactory sex life. Lack of knowledge and ease in understanding each other debilitates

relationship. Most other causes are personal, like not having issues, in-law feud, alcoholism, dowry demands and extramarital

relationships. Almost all the subjects have stated more than one reason for seeking divorce.

Table II: Level of Adjustment in Male Divorcees

Areas	Unsatisfactory		Poor		Average		Good		Excellent	
	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Emotional	5	-	40	-	45	60	10	40	-	-
Family	5	-	15	-	50	35	15	45	15	20
Health	-	-	10	-	60	55	10	25	20	20
Occupation	-	-	10	-	40	25	35	55	15	20
Sex	5	5	20	-	70	75	5	15	-	-
Social	5	-	45	5	45	70	5	25	-	5

B.T. : Before Treatment, % : Percentage, A.T. : After Treatment

The need for adjustment is an important characteristic for fruitful and wholesome life. It is equally important for divorcees to inculcate adjustment, inspite of the adversity of their life. Table II A indicates the effect of positive therapy, a behaviour modification technique in the different areas of adjustment, although bringing about a total change in adjustment among divorcees is not easy, as varied aspects contribute towards adjustment.

It is very conspicuous that the adjustment of divorcees before the treatment showed considerable poor adjustment in all the areas especially in emotional and social adjustment with 40% and 45% respectively.

The result after the treatment reveals a movement towards average or good adjustment with 60% and 40% in the area of emotion and 70% and 25% in the area of social adjustment. The adjustment to

sex also shows a positive trend but not very expressive. This is because of the inhibition and conservatism towards sex.

The Table II B indicates that the score of females in different areas of adjustment seem more promising than that of males. It is observed that the trend movement in all the areas has been from poor to good. The women of today, with a worldly knowledge, having taken up careers, are open to suggestions with the treatment of Positive Therapy. The women show even excellent adjustment (30% in family adjustment and 55% good adjustment in the area of emotional social), which could in time extend the environment, thus revealing that women are more steadfast.

The study of divorcees, with the treatment module of positive therapy practiced by them; show a drastic improvement in their levels of adjustment.

A. LEVEL OF ADJUSTMENT IN FEMALE DIVORCEES

Areas	Unsatisfactory		Poor		Average		Good		Excellent	
	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT	B.T.	AT
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Emotional	5	-	35	-	45	45	15	55	-	-
Family	5	-	15	20	30	20	35	30	15	30
Health	25	-	20	-	45	50	5	35	5	15
Occupation	5	-	10	-	20	30	35	30	10	20
Sex	15	-	15	10	50	60	20	30	-	-
Social	10	-	25	-	40	30	20	55	5	15

B.T. : Before Treatment, % : Percentage, A.T. : After Treatment

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Areas	Mean (S.D.)	t - Value
Emotional Adjustment		
Female	1.4 (0.21)	*6.66
Male	1.3(0.21)	*6.19
Family Adjustment		
Female	1.15 (0.25)	*4.8
Male	1.15(0.26)	*4.42
Health Adjustment		
Female	2.2 (0.36)	*6.11
Male	0.75(0.19)	*3.95
Occupational Adjustment		
Female	0.94(0.31)	*3.03
Male	0.65(0.13)	*5.00
Sexual Adjustment		
Female	0.8 (0.24)	*3.33
Male	0.6(0.19)	*3.16
Social Adjustment		
Female	1.85(0.38)	*4.87
Male	1.45(0.18)	*8.06

* P < 0.01

The adjustment pattern of male and female subjects before and after the intervention shows a very positive trend, in that, the subjects who had been given the intervention of Positive Therapy, show an enhancement in their adjustive process. The areas of adjustment that show a profound improvement are emotion, health and social, which are crucial for good well-being. It is very gratifying to note that the mean difference in all the areas of adjustment after intervention is high and is significant at 0.01 level. Emotion is the most important area of adjustment, being the basis on which other aspects gather upon. It is one's state of mind. The T-value of 6.66 and 6.19 in female and male respectively is challenging.

Conclusion

1. The main cause of divorce was lack of communication
2. The level of adjustment in the Emotional and Social areas was Poor for both the male and female divorcees.
3. The level of adjustment in the Health and Sex areas was Average in both the male and female divorcees.
4. Positive Therapy has helped almost all the subjects to cope with stress, develop courage, confidence, cheerfulness and overall adjustment to life.

Recommendations

A happy marriage is like heaven on earth, a paradise that even God yearns to enter. But, even the best marriages might turn rough occasionally and divorce is inevitable in some cases. To help the divorcees, the following can be done:

1. Counselling centers, where Marriage Counselling by experts is given, should be established.
2. Help lines can be established along with the Counselling centers.
3. Positive Therapy, as a Behaviour Modification technique, should be given to the couples before they seek divorce.
4. Pre-marital Counselling must be made as a part of the curriculum for the college students.
5. Further research on the other psychological variables shall be conducted with the same sample.

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