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Effectiveness of listening to spiritual texts on the personality components of couples

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ABSTRACT

The current research aims to determine the effectiveness of listening to spiritual texts on the personality components of couples. The research methodology is experimental with pretest, posttest and follow-up. The population includes all of the couples residing at phase 2 of Ekbatan located in Tehran, and among those 30 couples were put into two groups of 30-individuals which means an experimental group and a control group. The NEO Costa inventory was used for collecting data. Data were analyzed by the use of MANCOVA. Finding showed that a significant difference exists between the adjusted means of two groups in neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientious. Also findings showed that listening to spiritual texts by couples significantly affects the five personality components of couples in experimental group compared to the control group. Individuals who have listened to spiritual texts have reported less neuroticism, more extraversion, more openness, more agreeableness and more conscientious than the control group. Thus it is possible to recommend listening to spiritual texts while working with clients with personality issues.

Keywords: Narrating Spiritual Texts, Personality Components, Couples.

INTRODUCTION

Since a long time ago sages, philosophers, mystics, psychologists, doctors and other experts used to discuss and share ideas about this issue that in providing health and treatment of physical and mental illnesses it is also possible to use the help of psychology and spirituality [1]. Tan & Dong (2001) consider the spirituality as a belief to unconditional love. This belief or faith does not bound itself to a specific religion, while due to benefitting from gentle spirit of love, it always had a worthy place among all of the religions and it has somehow become adapted to them without losing its originality, this is the secret to durability of spirituality [2].

In today's world poems are used for affecting different kinds of things, for example poems in medical fields are used as a kind of treatment. Nowadays poems accelerate the healing process, decrease the blood pressure, and treat the hyperactive children, curing mental illnesses, depression, decreasing anxiety and stress, curing insomnia, better growth of premature children and ... [3].

Reading poems could have a positive or negative effect (based on the type of poem) on the metabolism of body, decrease or increase of blood pressure, energy level of body, human gastrointestinal tract and ... For example,

traditional poems (mystical texts) have a better effectiveness on the body and they result in increase of endorphin in the body [4].

In our homeland Balkhi Rumi is one of the most influential mystics that nobody could reaches his dignity. The lofty status of Rumi is undeniable, because the experts and public enthusiastically read Masnavi and this reputation has incredibly extended without any language boundaries. Some people consider the Rumi's thoughts as a shining candle in the way to reach their target, and each person benefits from that according to his/her personality traits [5]. Defining the personality it could be said that personality demonstrates the deep-seated and extensive pattern of thinking or cognitive, emotional habits and behavioral characteristics which remain constant during times [6].

Regarding the five-factor model, personality is hierarchically organized in five factors, and each of them includes some subsets. At the top of this hierarchy the personality includes: neuroticism (N), extraversion (E), openness to experience (O), agreeableness (A), conscientiousness (C) [7]. Among these five factors, two factors of extraversion and agreeableness are related to the personality traits having interpersonal nature. The factor of conscientiousness basically covers the goal-oriented behavioral traits, and also controlling the momentum in a way which is favorable for the society. The neuroticism covers the emotional consistency against a range of negative emotions such as sorrow, irritability, nervous tension and etc. And the openness is also related to the breadth, depth and complexity of intellectual aspects and individual's experiences. Massive amounts of researches in different languages, with different tools and different samples approved that these five factors are the main factors and they showed that all of these five factors have an appropriate convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument and the observer, and also they are relatively constant during the individual's changes [8].

Adherence to certain principles of psychology and mysticism is effective on the enhancement of mental health, healthy behaviors and improving the lifestyle and it could result in maintaining health and regaining the health of the patient (treatment). Additionally, mystical (spiritual) socializations and teachings result in the personal and social supports which decrease the effects of mental pressure and loneliness. Also listening to spiritual texts being narrated creates positive emotions and it is effective for enhancing the health. What is being discussed in mysticism is self-analysis for reaching the right [9].

A question has always engaged the psychologists' mind that to what extent the human's personality is dynamic and changeable? Several conducted researchers indicate that fewer results confirm and more results reject the possibility of change and transformation in the personality. According to the theoretical and research background, the personality traits and achieved results from the researches it could be claimed that personality change is a very complicated and difficult task [10]. Regarding this matter and regarding the effect of spiritual texts and poems on the spirit and social and personal life of individuals, the current research seeks to find the answer to this question that do the spiritual texts being narrated affect the five personality components of couples?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is an experimental and applied research, with a pretest-posttest and follow-up research project and by the use of control group. The research population includes all of the couples residing at phase 2 of Ekbatan located in Tehran and the amount is 100 individuals. The sample includes 30 couple residing at this area and they were randomly put into two groups of experimental (15 couples) and control group (15 couples). After performing the pretest the experimental group attended in a 10-training sessions of spiritual texts, 2 hours per session. After finishing the 10-training sessions, the posttest was performed on both groups. In order to survey the stability of effect of trainings, one month after the end of interventions again the inventory was conducted on the examinees of both groups.

Measurements

The NEO personality inventory (Neo PI-R) and narration of spiritual texts were used for measuring the required data, and further we will give more description about these tools. The NEO PI-R is one of the personality tests which are based on analyzing the made factors, and it is one of the newest tools in the personality field, being introduced by Costa and McCrae in 1985 named as the NEO personality inventory. The revised form of this inventory was offered by the same authors named as revised NEO personality inventory [11].

The long form of this inventory in 240 phrases is designed for measuring the five factors or main fields of neuroticism, extraversion, flexibility, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Also this inventory has another form called NEO-FFI which is a 60-question inventory used for evaluating the main five factors of personality. In the 240-question form, each factor (trait) has 6 levels or subscales, while in the short form each factor is evaluated by 12 questions. The long form of the inventory has been validated in different countries such as Iran. In Iran the long form has been validated by Garousi, Mehryar and Tabatabaei (2001) and the validation results were similar to the results achieved from the test in the original language [12]. The results of conducted studies by McCrae and Costa (1992) showed that the correlation of 5 subscales of the short form and long form is from 0.77 to 0.92 [7]. Also the internal consistency of its subscales was estimated in the range of 0.68 to 0.86. In the current research the split method and Pearson correlation have been used for determining the reliability of inventories and the results showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient related to the component of neuroticism was 0.818, extraversion was 0.901, openness to experience was 0.834, agreeableness was 0.867 and conscientiousness was 0.882, and it indicates that the tool being used has an appropriate reliability.

Spiritual texts: This variable includes the description of second book of Rumi's Masnavi, covering more than 3819 lines and the exegete have put it on a compact disk within 12 hours. During these 10-training sessions according to the determined method which includes 8 anecdotes from second book of Masnavi, these anecdotes were chosen by Dr. Sazmand the researcher in the field of Rumi.

RESULTS

The mean and standard deviation of age of the individuals being surveyed in terms of experimental and control group are respectively 37.60, 6.01, 36.13 and 5.00 and the individuals' literacy rate in the experimental group was 33.3% diploma, 10% higher diploma, 40% bachelor degree and 16.7% master degree and higher, while the individuals' literacy rate in the control group was 30% diploma, 10% higher diploma, 46.7% bachelor degree and 13.3% master degree and higher.

The descriptive information related to the mean and SD of individuals' scores in subscales of NEO personality inventory, before and after the intervention and in the follow-up level in experimental and control groups are provided in table 1.

Table 1: Mean and SD of individuals' scores in experimental and control group, before and after the intervention and follow-up

Subscale	Group	Before intervention		After intervention		Follow-up	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Neuroticism	Experimental	22.73	3.86	19.80	3.61	20.67	3.45
	Control	22.47	5.20	22.20	5.00	22.03	4.93
Extraversion	Experimental	27.00	4.31	29.27	4.91	28.53	4.60
	Control	25.66	3.19	26.33	3.82	26.17	3.33
Openness to experience	Experimental	25.57	4.01	27.40	4.21	26.77	3.98
	Control	25.53	4.28	25.43	4.45	25.40	4.17
Agreeableness	Experimental	24.23	5.08	27.67	4.77	26.53	4.84
	Control	25.07	4.09	25.23	4.26	24.97	4.08
Conscientiousness	Experimental	29.20	3.62	32.07	4.02	31.23	3.90
	Control	29.36	3.64	29.47	3.64	29.60	3.80
Five personality Components	Experimental	128.73	12.77	136.20	13.61	133.73	13.02
	Control	128.10	13.48	128.64	14.55	128.17	13.67

As the findings of table 1 show, in the subscale of neuroticism the individuals' mean of scores in the experimental group had a decrease after the intervention compared to before the intervention but in the control group this decrease is low and insignificant. In other subscales of the test, the individuals' mean of score had an increase in the test components after the intervention compared to before the intervention but in the control group this increase is low and insignificant. These effects had a slight change in the one-month follow-up but these changes are insignificant, and it could be said that these changes remained in the follow-up level as well.

Table 2 findings show that by adjusting the effect of scores of pretest of couples' five personality components on its posttest, the F related to the effect of group equals 33.569, which is significant at the statistical level of less than 0.05. Thus it could be said that listening to spiritual texts by the couples could have a significant effect on the couples' five personality components in the experimental group compared to the control group. The eta squared

shows that 89.9% of difference in variance of posttest scores of couples' five personality components between both groups is caused by performing the intervention. Also the findings showed that the effectiveness of listening to spiritual texts in the experimental group respectively in components of agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience and extraversion has a significant difference compared to the control group. In the above mentioned table it is indicated that by adjusting the effect of pretest scores of couples' five personality components on the examinees' scores one month after ending the interventions, the F related to all of the surveyed variables at statistical level below 0.05 is significant. Thus it could be said that listening to spiritual texts by couples could significantly result in the stability of effect of trainings on the couples' five personality components in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Table 2: Results achieved from the ANCOVA analysis on the individuals' mean of scores in experimental and control groups before and month after ending the interventions (n= 60)

Variables	Source of changes	Total square	dfs	Mean square	F	Significance level	Eta squared	Statistical power
Neuroticism	pretest	923.76	1	923.76	418.31	0.00	0.88	0.96
	Groups	36.97	1	36.97	16.74	0.00	0.87	
	Error	125.87	57	2.21				
Extraversion	pretest	684.14	1	684.14	155.06	0.00	0.75	0.92
	Groups	19.54	1	19.54	4.43	0.04	0.74	
	Error	251.49	57	4.41				
Openness to experience	pretest	827.57	1	827.57	552.61	0.00	0.91	0.98
	Groups	26.75	1	26.75	16.94	0.00	0.90	
	Error	90.00	57	1.58				
Agreeableness	Pretest	1129.70	1	1129.70	797.63	0.00	0.94	1.00
	Groups	83.14	1	83.14	58.70	0.00	0.93	
	Error	80.73	57	1.42				
Conscientiousness	Pretest	762.40	1	762.40	442.70	0.00	0.89	0.97
	Groups	48.71	1	48.71	28.28	0.00	0.88	
	Error	98.16	57	1.72				
Five-personality Components	Pretest	9641.41	1	9641.41	791.17	0.00	0.94	1.00
	Groups	366.53	1	366.53	30.08	0.00	0.93	
	Error	694.62	57	12.19				

CONCLUSION

The results of research "Effectiveness of Listening to Spiritual Texts on the Personality Components of Couples" showed that listening to the spiritual texts affects the couples' five personality components.

In a research Zibaei (2005) surveyed the effect of listening to spiritual texts on the five personality components [13]. The research results indicate that the decrease of neuroticism (N) and increase of openness to experience (O) and three other factors including agreeableness (A), extraversion (E), and conscientiousness (C) did not have any significant change. The achieved results strongly show the empowerment of the mentioned variable during the temporary change of personality traits with emphasis on the Iranian experimental group due to the nativity of the gender of independent variable, but the current research has observed a significant change in all of the components, and this difference could be explained as the spirituality provides solid foundations and healthy framework for personality growth and a guarantee for human's continuous movement in the way toward reaching self-actualization and personal maturity [14]. If the individual's anger is not being expressed properly this possibility exists that this will become internalized and will result in depression, disappointment and committing suicide, because depression is considered as one of the components of neuroticism [15] and it could even affect the interpersonal relationships. Jan Bozorgi (1999) also in his research he concluded that spiritual-oriented treatment reduces the general anxiety, and increases the public health, and it affects all of the personality anxiety factors (emotional stability)(tendency toward feeling guilt), (social insecurity) toward reducing anxiety, and this is similar to the current research result about the neuroticism[4]. Also in a research Bayrami (2009) conducted for the difference of effectiveness of spiritual intervention-based consultations with the standard consultations on the mental health of university students visiting the Student Counseling Center of University of Tabriz it was determined that the spiritual-based consultation reduces the anxiety, depression and disorder in social function of problematic university students more than the standard consultations, and it increases their mental health [16].

Siang (2008), Wallace and Shapiro (2006), Gresham, Watson & Skinner (2001), Latkin and James (1972) in their research finding reached to this point that spirituality has a considerable role in the health and mental health which is

similar to the current research results [17]. Furthermore we can refer to Allison's idea which believes that spirituality and mysticism are not separated from the physical and mental aspects of individuals and they provide an integrated force and if the human beings are spiritually healthy in their mental health zone they will feel alive, targeted and satisfied [18].

In explaining other components such as extraversion it could be said that extroverts are social individuals, this kind of people are philanthropists and they like participating in social gatherings and ceremonies. They are decisive in practice, active and talkative. They love excitement and movement, and they believe to be successful in the future [19]. One of the expressing methods of behavioral characteristics such as introversion and extraversion is writing a poem, and definitely reading it for a group of people. In mystical poetry therapy the individual tries to express all of his/her distressing feelings and thoughts in the form of words and a poem. In this method the individual unconsciously expresses all of his/her attributes and behaviors and reasons of his/her shortcomings that now result in showing signs in him/her in the form of words and through describing and fantasizing freely. He/she could describe a person and blames that person.

Also the research results showed that in the subscale of neuroticism the mean of scores of individuals in the experimental group had a decrease after the intervention compared to before the intervention but this decrease was insignificant in the control group.

Poetry therapy is a new and special method in the psychoanalytic perspective, and nowadays writing poems in groups, reading them and performing them, using poems in groups and using them for treating the neurotic patient, problems of the adolescent, youth, addicts and psychotic patients [20].

In other subscales of the test, mean of scores of individuals in test components of after the intervention compared to before the intervention had an increase.

In Masnavi, Rumi in his own way and very wisely one by one mount the cognitive structures on each other by using the stories, narrations and other things in order to provide the conscious and matched human being's massive structure of attitudes. The aim of spirituality and mysticism is self-recognition and finding the inner potentials. Mysticism helps the human being to recognize others the way they are with all of their positive and negative points and it helps the human beings to have a realistic relationship with others away from idealized self-centered individualistic expectations [13].

Spirituality and mysticism give meaning to life and make the human being to have a goal and the sense of dependence on God's eternal power gives a power to human being that guarantees him/her against any types of mental and psychological diseases. Apart from the high motivation for serving others, it creates a kind of resistance toward problems and preventing from physical and mental illnesses. Apart from its benefits in the field related to human beings the spiritual journey eliminates the base for many personal and social abnormalities, so that the spiritually minded people have health, higher morale, no anxiety, more success at their marriage, they are optimistic, and they have less individual deviations [21].

Listening to the spiritual texts by the couples significantly results in persistence of effects of trainings on the couples' five personality components in the experimental group compared to the control group, and perhaps it could be said that one of the other features of Rumi's poems is their sustainability and lasting impact on people.

One of the limitations of this research is that relative knowledge and understanding about the inventory causes some of the individuals in performing the tests not to have the required honesty and too many questions and ultimately examinees' fatigue and their tendency toward giving superficial and thoughtless answers to the test questions make the researcher to be cautious in generalizing the results.

Regarding the effectiveness of this mental training intervention and the persistence of this effectiveness it is recommended to perform this type of therapy in the group therapies in hospitals, mental health clinics, drug treatment centers, prisons, rehabilitation centers and homes of elderlies in order to improve and cure these individuals and also it is recommended to choose two groups of men and women separately that in case of a need the possibility exists to compare the two genders differently.

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