

# The Effectiveness of Teaching Stress Management on Self-Efficacy and Quality of Life in Divorcées

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## Abstract

This research aims to study the influence of stress management training in self-efficacy and quality of life of the divorcées in Ahvaz. The research sample consists of 15 divorcées in a control group and 15 in an experimental group, selected by simple random sampling. The self-efficacy Rolandick and Life Quality SF\_36 Questionnaires were used in this research. The research project was of pre-test and post-test type with control group. Pre-test was administered for both groups and then stress management teaching as the independent variable was administered on experimental group, after completion of, post-test was administered on both groups. The MANCOVA was used to analyze data. The results showed that compared to the control group, stress management training increased self-efficacy and quality of life beliefs of divorcées in the experimental group.

**Keywords:** stress management, self-efficacy belief, quality of life, divorcees

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the social problems and issues of different nature have caused an increase in the number of divorce cases and a drop in divorce age. The issues of divorcees have a higher variety than those of men. Undoubtedly the issues of divorcées required a greater sense of accountability and imposed much mental pressure on these individuals. Therefore, controlling these mental pressures provides the ground for experiencing peace and efficacy in these individuals (Quick et al., 1997). Stress management training and identifying it in divorcées tend to positively influence the cognitive structures in these people. Belief in self-efficacy and the level of life quality of divorcées can be improved and promoted by stress management training strategies. The feeling and belief in self-efficacy is the belief in a growing ability that can help the individual turn his personal capabilities into useful performance. Living and social conditions are most often stressful and unpredictable for divorcées. Life situations are always changing. Self-efficacy is the motivational variable that determines the individual's appropriate coping strategy when his/her skills and abilities are under pressure (Minayi, 2013).

Stress management skills can motivate the individuals to believe in their abilities and to feel self-efficient and perform the tasks extraordinarily using the skills when confronting obstacles (Schwarzer et al., 1997). Some research works have been conducted in this regard. Education Service Advisory Committee (1998) in a research reported that educational measures on stress management had a great influence in self-efficacy and hardiness in women. Smith & Carlson (1997) observed that women who experienced much stress and appeared as incapable women may experience more problems. Women who successfully controlled stress were less likely to experience problems. Pines et al., (2012) in a study proved the influence of stress management training in increasing motivational beliefs. Schwarzer et al., (1997) in a study stated that once stress is managed the individual will be able to cope with the needs and challenges of his life in a better way and this will increase self-efficacy. Also, teaching stress control skills could lead to increase in the life quality of divorcées who experienced different social and economic problems. Humans are always seeking to find a strategy to improve their lives and take a variety of steps in this way. Certainly, quality of life plays an important role in guaranteeing dynamism and self-efficacy of every individual and community (Ghafari & Omidi, 2009).

Quality of life is a dynamic and subjective structure that compares the past life situation to the recent incidents in all positive and negative aspects. The subjective nature of life quality is concerned with the individuals'

perception about their living condition instead of what might be reported by others. Quality of life is rooted in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with those parts of life which are important to the individual. Therefore, individuals with similar problems may have various opinions about the quality of their lives and report it differently. It should be noted that living a life of favorable quality is rooted in beliefs and necessary trainings (Watson et al., 2012).

Tuttle (2006) in a research showed that teaching life skills was effective in improving the ability to establish a positive relationship and increasing flexibility in reaction and life quality. In a study, Jeffrey (2009) reported that teaching life skills increased stress coping power and the individuals would be better at solving problems and obstacles. Hovey (2000) reported that psychological measures increased the individual's perception of stress and improved life quality. McCarty et al., (2000) showed that stress management training contributed to progress in cognitive performance, and emotional and behavioral balance. Timmerman et al., (2012) studied the efficacy of stress management training programs and the results proved that teaching stress management skills could reduce mental pressure and anxiety, and improve everyday life involvements leading to a higher level of satisfaction. According to the above, divorcées who perceive many social-mental and economic problems and still experience a high mental pressure can be provided stress management training in order to successfully perform their functions and required basic skills.

Divorcées confront a variety of problems and may face numerous concerns when it comes to tackling their issues. They have to face many challenges such as the stress of mental and social problems (Hafarian et al., 2009). When people are under stress, they should have the required confrontation skills in order to be able to reduce the influence of stress. Stress can undermine the human forces and influence activities and endeavors. When a stressful factor dominates the human life, the balance of emotional and thinking mood will be disturbed, the cognitive activities will become vulnerable and behavioral problems will be invoked such as anxiety and depression (Geving, 2007). If stress is controlled and effective coping skills are provided, the individual will be able to better cope with the needs and challenges in life (Godfrey, 2004).

Several studies show that stress management training can expand the individuals' self-efficacy expectation in many areas. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people believe, think, motivate themselves and behave. Belief in self-efficacy is a constructive power that is organized by means of cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral skills of the humans for the effective realization of various objectives. Background skills and achievements and knowledge of the individual are not good predictors of their future performance. It is rather the individual's belief in his/her ability to perform the tasks that affects the performance (Minayi, 2013).

From one side, stress management training and approach is an important tool for the divorcées to confront many problems which positively influences the important aspects of their lives. A high quality life is a mental concept based on the values and interests which are related to the level of satisfaction with life and, under appropriate training, can help the individual reach internal peace about oneself and society. Life quality is considered as a balance in supplying and satisfying the biological and human needs and integration of individuals in various social circumstances and grounds, which is associated with living skills training (Minayi, 2013).

Divorcées may face numerous mental, social, and emotional problems. These pressures may lead to stress in different aspects. It is therefore necessary to teach stress management to these women and provide the ground of increasing belief in self-efficacy when facing life challenges and having a high quality life. The question in this research is whether stress management training is effective in the amount of self-efficacy and life quality of divorcées. Therefore, research hypotheses may include:

- 1- Stress management training is effective in the belief in self-efficacy in divorcées.
- 2- Stress management training is effective in the life quality of divorcées.

## 2. Method

The statistical population of this research includes all divorcées referring to welfare department of Ahvaz in 2013. Research sample consists of 30 divorcées from this population. First, a list of divorcées referring to welfare department was provided. Thereafter, 15 women were randomly selected and placed in a control group and 15 in an experimental group. Sampling method was simple and random. In this research, semi-empirical research method of pre-test and post-test nature was used for the control group. Experimental and control groups were randomly equalized. A pre-test was administered before empirical interventions on experimental and control groups. The post-test was administered at the end of intervention. The tools used in this research included the following two questionnaires:

*Self-Efficacy Questionnaire*: this 17-item questionnaire was developed by Rolendick et al., (1987). The questions

were answered on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. In a research, the questionnaire reliability was gained 0.84 and 0.84 respectively by Cronbach's alpha and split methods. The questionnaire validity was gained 0.48 at level 0.001 through correlation with Rotter Internal Control Questionnaire (Minayi, 2013). The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire gained 0.86 based on Cronbach's alpha method.

*Life Quality Questionnaire:* Life Quality Questionnaire SF-36 was designed by Varosherbon. The lowest score in this questionnaire was zero and the highest was one hundred. The questionnaire is scored in this way: total scores in each subscale are divided by eight to gain the total score on life quality. In a research, the reliability coefficient of life quality questionnaire was calculated 0.95 using Cronbach's alpha method, an indication of favorable reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire reliability was gained 0.66 at level 0.0001 through correlation with life quality questionnaire of the World Health Organization, which indicated a high validity of the questionnaire (Saatchi et al., 2011). In the present research, the reliability coefficient of life quality questionnaire was obtained 0.92 by Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

*Stress management training sessions:* session one: what is stress and how is it identified? Session two: the root of stress. Session three: life style and stress. Session four: the requirements of releasing from stress. Session five: stress control at home and at work. Session six: enhancing life skills with basic measures of stress management. Session seven: stress management strategies. Session eight: summary, poll, and final suggestions.

### 3. Result

According to the results, Table 2 with pre-test control of the significance level of all tests indicates that there is a significant difference in at least one of the dependent variables (belief in self-efficacy and life quality) between divorcées in the experimental group and divorcées in the control group ( $F=90.89$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The influence or difference is 0.87 indicating that 87% of individual differences in post-test scores on belief in self-efficacy and life quality are associated with the influence of stress management training.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of belief in self-efficacy and life quality in experimental and control groups in pre-test and post-test stages

Variables	Stage	Statistical Index/ Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Self-efficacy	Pre-test	Experiment	43.60	3.41	15
		Control	45.26	3.63	15
	Post-test	Experiment	65.93	4.91	15
		Control	46.66	2.14	15
Life quality	Pre-test	Experiment	47.49	2.35	15
		Control	46.76	3.42	15
	Post-test	Experiment	61.87	4.63	15
		Control	47.45	2.61	15

Table 2. The results of multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) on the post-test meanscores of belief in self-efficacy and life quality of divorcées in experimental and control groups with pre-test control

Test Name	Quantity	DF Hypothesis	DF Error	F	P	Influence	Statistical balance
Pillai's Trace Test	0.87	2	25	90.89	0.001	0.87	1
Wilks' Lambda Test	0.12	2	25	90.89	0.001	0.87	1
Hotelling's Trace Test	7.27	2	25	90.89	0.001	0.87	1
Roy's Largest Root Test	7.27	2	25	90.89	0.001	0.87	1

Table 3. One-way analysis of covariance results in MANCOVA ground on the post-test meanscores of belief in self-efficacy and life quality of divorcées in experimental and control groups with pretest control

Variables	Roots Sum	DF	Squares Average	F	p	Trace	Statistical Power
Belief in self-efficacy	5866.06	1	5866.06	156.53	0.001	0.81	1
Life quality	847.59	1	847.59	226.29	0.001	0.86	1

Table 3 shows that with pre-test control, there is a significant difference between divorcées in the experimental group and divorcées in the control group as concerns belief in self-efficacy ( $F=156.53$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and life quality ( $F=226.29$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In other words, stress management training increased the belief in self-efficacy and life quality in experimental group according to the mean scores obtained on the belief in self-efficacy and life quality by divorcées in the experimental group.

The influence or difference is equivalent to 0.81 and 0.86; the 81% and 86% individual differences in the scores of post-test on the belief in self-efficacy and life quality are associated with the influence of stress management training.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of current study was investigate the effectiveness of teaching stress management on self-efficacy and quality of life in divorcées. Results of the first hypothesis of research conform to research works of Education Service Advisory Committee (1998), Smith & Carlson (1997), Schwarzer et al., (1997) and Pines et al., (2012). Divorcées are facing a lot of problems which cause them to confront many concerns to cope with these problems. The stress from mental and social problems puts these women under the pressure of facing a lot of challenges. Providing these women with stress management training helps them use their effective skills to assess, cope with and solve their problems. Stress management raining helps divorcées learn problem solving and self-efficacy skills and use their abilities and belief in their abilities to succeed in a specific situation. Divorcées are facing many social, mental, and emotional problems that may lead to numerous types of stress and may jeopardize the social-mental function of the individual.

Therefore, stress management and control training can have an important role in the attitude and outlook of divorcées toward their objectives, duties, and challenges. With stress management training, these women achieved higher level of self-efficacy in solving their problems and using their skills and showed higher interest in challenging social and career issues because they learned to control mental pressures. This research proved that stress management training helps divorcées improve their quality of life. Results of the second hypothesis of research conform to the studies of Tuttle (2006), Jeffrey (2009), Hovey (2000), McCraty et al., (2000) and Timmerman et al., (2012).

Stress management training helped these women give cognitively and behaviorally effective responses to problematic situations and learn coping strategies. Stress management training helped divorcées use their effective cognitive skills to cope with problematic interpersonal situations and experience less interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts, increase their resiliency in challenges and difficulties, and refresh and rebuild themselves with hardiness. It can be therefore stated that stress management training helped these women have a triumphant view of the unpleasant events of their separation through heightened life quality, achieve a sense of greater social value, and keep and promote their social and personal competence even in harsh stressful situations. It can be concluded that by control and management of stressful situations in divorcées, who are under great pressures due to social, individual and economic problems, they can expect an increase in life quality despite unpleasant living conditions.

Stress management training could enhance belief in self-efficacy and life quality of divorcées in the experimental group compared to the control group. Therefore, stress management training can create the conditions of improving the sense of self-efficacy in divorcées. Improved self-efficacy can in turn motivate these women to attempt to change their lifestyle and reduce anxiety and stress and show higher levels of life quality in various aspects of their career or social and educational life.

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