



## The Effectiveness of Compassion-based Therapy on Marital Intimacy, Quality of Life, and Chronic Pain of Women Affected by Marital Infidelity

Seyed Mojtaba Aghili<sup>1\*</sup> , Samira Niyazi<sup>2</sup> , Ensiyeh Babae<sup>3</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

2. M. A. of Psychology, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payam Noor University, Golestan, Iran.

3. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

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**Corresponding Author:**

Seyed Mojtaba Aghili

**Email:**

[dr\\_aghili1398@yahoo.com](mailto:dr_aghili1398@yahoo.com)

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### Abstract

This research was aimed to determine the effectiveness of compassion-based therapy on marital intimacy, quality of life, and chronic pain of women affected by marital infidelity in Minodasht city. The statistical population included all the married women affected by spouse infidelity who referred to counseling centers and psychological service clinics of Minodasht Welfare Department in the period of November to December 2022. Thirty women were selected by purposive sampling and they were randomly assigned in two experimental and control groups (15 subjects in each group). The present study was a semi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with a control group and a follow-up phase. The experimental group underwent eight 60 minutes' sessions of compassion-based therapy based on the protocol of Tirsch et al. (2014). The follow-up was conducted three months after the termination of the post-test. Data was collected by implementing Thompson and Walker's (1983) Marital Intimacy Scale, Warr et al.'s Quality of Life Questionnaire (1993) and McGill's Chronic Pain Questionnaire (1975). The research data was analyzed by repeated measure analysis of variance test. The results showed that the treatment based on compassion on marital intimacy ( $F=14.763$ ,  $P<0.000$ ), quality of life ( $F=13.852$ ,  $P<0.000$ ) and chronic pain ( $F=455.626$ ,  $P<0.000$ ) of women affected by marital infidelity were effective and these results were permanent until the follow-up period. The results also indicated that compassion-based therapy had an effect on increasing marital intimacy, quality of life, and reducing the chronic pain of women affected by marital infidelity by creating an atmosphere of empathy and kindness towards oneself.



## Extended abstract

**Introduction:** Infidelity is defined as establishing any intimate relationship with a third person, accompanied by sexual and emotional caress, which violates the commitment of the marital relationship and is associated with emotional suffering in the victim. Couples affected by marital infidelity often experience tension and negative emotions such as hostility, sexual and interpersonal intimacy, which can be intense and out of control. Intimacy causes people to share important parts of themselves with others and in sincere relationships there is empathy, honesty, self-disclosure, passion, openness and clarity of behavior. The close relationship between infidelity and marital intimacy causes other aspects of people's lives to be affected, such as the quality of life. Quality of life is defined as the result of the interaction between people's personality and the continuity of life events, and life events occur in a multidimensional set of life domains such as freedom, knowledge, economy, security, social relations, religion, environment and recreation. Chronic pain and the experience of living with it is a unique experience. A person's perception of pain is affected by physical, psychological and social variables. Among the effective behavioral therapy approaches in the field of betrayal, we can mention compassion-based therapy, which includes the three principles of mindfulness, self-kindness, and a sense of sharing with humanity. Therefore, since the specific cultural, religious and social conditions of our society, it is necessary to use effective interventions to help couples who have faced this problem, so that appropriate solutions can be provided according to the cultural context of its different regions, which are also in prevention. This issue should be effective and therapists can help such clients with more empathy and understanding. Therefore, according to the reported materials, the aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of compassion-based therapy on marital intimacy, quality of life, and chronic pain in women affected by marital infidelity in Minodasht city.

**Method:** The method of the current research was a semi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with control and follow-up groups. The statistical population of the research was all the married women affected by the infidelity of the spouse who referred to counseling centers and psychological service clinics of Minodasht Welfare Department in the period of November to December 2022. 30 women were selected by purposive sampling and they were randomly assigned in two experimental and control groups (15 subjects each group). The experimental group underwent eight 60-minutes sessions of compassion-based therapy based on the protocol of Tirsch et al. (2014). The follow-up period was conducted three months after the termination of the post-test. Data was collected by implementing Thompson and Walker's (1983) Marital Intimacy Scale, Warr et al.'s Quality of Life Questionnaire (1993) and McGill's Chronic Pain Questionnaire (1975). The research data was analyzed by repeated measure analysis of variance test.

**Results:** The research results showed that compassion-based treatment was effective on marital intimacy ( $F=14.763$ ,  $P<0.000$ ), quality of life ( $F=13.852$ ,  $P<0.000$ ) and chronic pain ( $F=455.626$ ,  $P<0.000$ ) of women affected by marital infidelity and these results lasted until the follow-up period.

**Conclusion:** The results of the research indicated that compassion-based therapy through increasing inner awareness, non-judgmental acceptance, empathy and continuous



attention to inner feelings, using therapeutic meditations, teaching love and breathing with feelings, led to the reduction of psychological problems. As a result, it improved the ability to solve problems, self-management and belief in a bright future, maintaining peace under pressure, marital intimacy, flexibility in facing obstacles, avoiding erosive strategies, reducing chronic pain and increasing quality of life.

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