Forgiveness Therapy After Spousal Abuse

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# **Summary**

The psychological impacts that women face often come long after the end of an abusive spousal relationship. The article gives a complete comparison of forgiveness therapy (FT) with other alternative psychological treatments (AT) such as confidence building, promotion of interpersonal skills and anger treatment for couples that were separated for more than 2 years. The efficiency of both methods was assessed and the effects of FT were far greater than AT. The patients experienced greater improvement in traits like stress, anxiety, depression, regaining their self-esteem, forgiveness. Forgiveness therapy showed long and stable implications on women who were emotionally abused in a spousal relationship.

The emotional and mental abuse that women face from their spouse or romantic partner is a major problem in relationships nowadays with almost one in every three women reporting such abuse (Reed & Enright, 2006). The study also shows that women also face severe psychological problems long after the end of an abusive relationship. Despite all the rallies for women's equality and rights, no one has significantly given any importance towards the issue of treatment for women that were in an abusive relationship. The literature focuses on the description and explanation of “what is emotional abuse” rather than the ways to treat its outcomes and develop therapeutic strategies.

One important new treatment that has very promising results is Forgiveness Therapy. The threats treatment through FT directly affects and targets the resentment and anger present in the mind of the patient. FT helps in creating a helpful relationship between forgiveness and improvement from depression and anxiety which can result in restoring self-esteem (Enright et al., 2016). Forgiveness therapy assumes that although initial anger is helpful and justifiable against abuse and wrongdoings, it later causes severe impacts on the mental health of the patient. Several studies on Forgiveness Therapy have been conducted on both small and large small sample size. The effect sizes were 1.58 for Lin et al, 1.44 for Freedman & Enright and 1.42 in the case of Coyle and Enright (Reed & Enright, 2006). The research design of this paper included individual therapy, moving at a pace at which the client was comfortable, the use of alternative treatment and proper evaluation for the determination of a person as a victim of psychological abuse. However, some of the weaknesses included the sample size of the experiment and the lack of knowledge about the previous history of patients.

# **Interaction**

The authors used a quantitative method for the analysis and solution of their proposed problem. The participants were 20 women who were psychologically abused in their spousal relationship and were either divorced or separated permanently from their spouses for at least 2 years. Their ages ranged from 32 to 54 years. The research sample was not ethnically diverse and the majority of the participants were European American Women i.e. 18 out of the 20 women were European American while 1 was Hispanic and one was a Native American. The employment status of women is an important factor in recognizing how women can give time to their family and as a result the number of fights in which spouses can engage with each other. The women that were included in the research were mostly employed with only 3 of them unemployed (Reed & Enright, 2006). The study was detailed and the author comprehensively described the abuses that were faced by the participants. The abuses included criticizing, ridiculing, control, purposefully ignoring, personal harm and intimidations to abandon them.

The reason I was interested in choosing this article was because of the details that were implied while analyzing the data and the design methods that were being used in the method. The testing procedure included a comprehensive checklist of stress symptoms, a mental abuse survey, and a checklist for screening psychological symptoms. The detail which was provided in this section is important and shows the dedication that was put forward during this analysis. Any participant was excluded from the study if she was in any recent abusive relationship because the study specifically focused on the long-term implications of abusive relationships.

Any further studies which can help me understand the current topic better include "Effects of Forgiveness Therapy on anger, mood and vulnerability to substance use among inpatient substance-dependent clients" and “intervention studies on forgiveness: A meta-analysis”. These research studies will further help me in understanding the implications of Forgiveness therapy in helping psychological patients better.

# **Application**

Forgiveness therapies have received a lot of attention in the last couple of decades, however, its use in the therapy is still isn’t that beneficial. Forgiveness therapy is very helpful and successful however, more research is still required on it. The scenario presented here is of a patient with a seven-year impact of continuous depression and anxiety after suffering an abusive relationship. She was 48 years of age, employed, and had a master's degree. Further examination revealed that she has continuous thoughts of vengeance and retribution but was not sure about their use. However, she was not ready to let go of those vengeful thoughts. The use of forgiveness therapy was surprising for her.

I told her that forgiveness can increase the mental and physical health of a patient. Forgiveness can lead to possible psychological and neurological curing of problems (Freedman & Enright, 2017). I also told her that it has also been previously beneficial for all the victims of abuse and violence and showed her the results of the studies that were conducted. I emphasize the fact that forgiveness is not just a moral virtue but there is also a factor of psychological treatment factor to it (Wade, 2010). It will give you more pleasure and relief after taking such a decision.

# **References**

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