

## Effectiveness of Solution-oriented Group Counseling on Improving Job Burnout and Resilience of Working Women Referring to Counseling Centers in Bushehr City

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### Article Info

#### Article type:

Case report

#### Article history:

Received 12 Feb. 2023

Received in revised form 29

Apr. 2023

Accepted 13 Sep. 2023

Published online 01 Dec. 2023

#### Keywords:

Solution-oriented group  
counseling,  
Job burnout,  
Resilience

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The objective of this research was to examine the impact of solution-oriented group counseling on enhancing job burnout and resilience among working women who seek assistance from counseling centers in Bushehr.

**Methods:** The research employed a semi-experimental method with a pre-test and post-test design, including a control group. The statistical population for this study consisted of all working women who sought counseling services in Bushehr during the first six months of 1402. The sample size consisted of 30 individuals who were selected using purposive sampling and assigned to either the experimental or control group. The research utilized the solution-oriented group counseling protocol developed by Riahiniya (2013), as well as the job burnout questionnaires created by Moslesh (1981) and the resilience questionnaire developed by Connor and Davidson (2003).

**Results:** The results indicated that solution-oriented group counseling led to improvements in all components of job burnout, specifically emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and individual performance, for the experimental group compared to the control group. Furthermore, the experimental group demonstrated improvements in various aspects of resilience, such as competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships, and control of security, compared to the control group.

**Conclusions:** . In conclusion, this research suggests that the implementation of solution-oriented group counseling can contribute to the enhancement of job burnout and resilience among working women.

**Cite this article:** Poorgholamy, F., Mohannaee, S., Shamoradi, N., Razavi Klishadi, M. & Eskandari, B. (2023). Effectiveness of solution-oriented group counseling on improving job burnout and resilience of working women referring to counseling centers in Bushehr city. *Iranian Journal of Educational Research*, 2 (4), 124-137.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/2.4.124>



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/2.4.124>

Publisher: University of Hormozgan.

## Introduction

Job burnout is one of the variables that puts a lot of psychological pressure on women in the field of work. Job burnout is the decrease in teachers' ability to adapt to stressful and symptomatic factors, compounded by physical and emotional fatigue. One of the factors that can cause burnout in the work of teachers is stress and its effects in the work environment. Job stress, as one of the main sources of stress in the lives of many teachers, can cause job burnout reactions and impose many consequences and costs on organizations and employees (Akirmak, 2019). Job burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental fatigue that occurs due to continuous and repeated emotional pressure caused by intense and long-term interaction with clients. The main symptoms of job burnout are: feeling helpless, despair, frustration, developing a negative view towards oneself and others. Job burnout occurs as a result of intense, continuous and controlled stress and when the demands of the work environment exceed the individual's personal abilities for adaptation or success. Whenever stress is not dealt with, job burnout occurs (Nunfam et al., 2019). Resilience is the ability to bounce back from sustained and ongoing difficulty and the ability to repair oneself. This human capacity can make him triumphantly overcome unfortunate events and improve his social, academic and professional competence despite being exposed to extreme tensions.

Resilience is a characteristic that varies from person to person and can grow or decrease over time and is formed based on the intellectual and practical self-correction of human beings in the trial and error process of life. Improving resilience leads to the growth of people in acquiring better thinking and self-management skills and more knowledge (Alessandri, 2016). On the other hand, resilience, as one of the important psychological characteristics, plays a vital role in women's mental health and is defined as a person's ability to maintain their health and successful performance, or adapt to a threatening or annoying situation. Resilience has found a special place in the fields of developmental psychology, family psychology and mental health. Resilience means that although a person lives in situations full of damage, he comes out of most of them proud and healthy. Resilience is applied to those who are exposed to danger but do not become impaired. Also, resilience is the process of coping and adapting successfully against challenging and life-threatening conditions, in other words, it is a type of positive adaptation against adverse conditions,

and strengthening it during childhood has a significant effect on adapting to different life conditions and mental health. Cleary, 2018).

Solution-oriented group counseling, due to its short term, emphasis on available resources and abilities, and speaking in the language of solutions, can have a good capacity to promote resilience, especially in women. This approach is one of the postmodern counseling and psychotherapy approaches that De Shazer (2000) developed and became known as hopeful counseling, in which language is of particular importance and experience in interacting with language, culture and psychological factors. is formed and they are also strongly related (De Shazer, 2000, quoted by Hione, 2020). Instead of focusing on damage and problems, solution-oriented group counseling tries to develop constructive behaviors and strengthen positive coping strategies, and provides an opportunity to call on resources, use capabilities, and consider possible solutions. In this approach, clients themselves are considered experts in their own problems, instead of consultants being considered in a position of power, expertise, and problem solving. Also, the consultant is placed in a different role, in the position of an inquisitive questioner who asks a set of questions and revives the capabilities and abilities of the clients in their minds (Hoffman, 2020).

The effect of solution-oriented group counseling has been highlighted in various research studies conducted by Namdar (2019), Misbah (2019), Derrebi (2019), Mohammadyari (2017), Sadeghi (2015), Iran Mehr (2015), Kadam Pour (2015), Ayar (2021), Hiune (2020), Berry (2016), Hoffman (2015), Thomson (2015), and Marsap (2010). These studies have shown that the use of solution-oriented group counseling has led to improvements in job burnout and women's resilience. It is important to emphasize the significance and necessity of research in this field, particularly in relation to solution-oriented counseling as a new treatment approach that is commonly used for short-term interventions. This approach has gained popularity worldwide due to its simplicity, short treatment duration, and ability to provide quick solutions.

Consequently, many therapists have adopted this approach. Process-based counseling has proven to be highly beneficial in organizations when working with employees, given its simplicity and practicality. Moreover, it is considered an important requirement for counselors in the country to provide counseling services to women. The solution-oriented approach in organizations focuses on encouraging employees to seek solutions and utilize internal resources. Therefore, consultants in organizations can effectively enhance employee effectiveness by applying this approach (Iran

Mehr, 2015). It is worth noting that the dependent variables investigated in relation to the effects of solution-oriented group counseling are job burnout and resilience. In light of this, the main research question is whether solution-oriented group counseling can effectively improve job burnout and resilience among working women seeking counseling services in Bushehr.

### Materials and Methods

In this study, a semi-experimental approach was employed utilizing a pre-test and post-test design alongside a control group. The experimental group underwent solution-oriented group counseling, while the control group received no training. Purposive sampling was used to select 30 individuals for both groups, and they were subsequently replaced. The statistical population consisted of working women who sought counseling services in Bushehr city during the first six months of 2023. Criteria for participation included no prior psychological treatment and the women's willingness to take part, as evidenced by signing a written consent form. Conversely, criteria for withdrawal from the study encompassed missing more than two consecutive meetings, expressing a desire to not cooperate, and lacking motivation to engage in the activities. Ethical considerations were addressed in the discussion, with participants being assured that their identities need not be disclosed for research purposes. Furthermore, participation was voluntary, and individuals were free to discontinue their involvement in the training sessions at any time.

### Instruments

**The Maslach Burnout Inventory:** Maslach Job Burnout Questionnaire has 22 questions on a 7-point Likert scale of never, rarely, little, sometimes, moderate, a lot, and always. This questionnaire has three subscales (emotional fatigue questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 20, depersonalization questions 5, 10, 11, 15, and 22 and individual performance questions 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19 and 21). The score range of each question changes from (0) to (6). The total score of the questions of each scale shows the individual's score in that scale. In this questionnaire, the middle option (never, little, sometimes, medium, high, and always) represents scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and the acquisition of a higher score indicates more problems. The interpretation of the obtained scores is as follows: a) In the emotional exhaustion subscale, a score higher than 30 indicates "high emotional exhaustion", a score between 18-29 indicates "moderate emotional exhaustion" and a

score less than 17 indicates "moderate emotional exhaustion". emotional exhaustion is low. b) In the depersonalization subscale, a score higher than 12 indicates "high depersonalization", a score between 6-11 indicates "moderate depersonalization" and a score less than 6 indicates "low depersonalization". c) In the subscale of individual performance, a score higher than 40 represents the level of "high individual performance", a score between 34-39 represents the level of "average individual performance", and a score less than 33 represents the level of "low individual performance". Meslesh (1981) reported the reliability of each of the components of conflict, closeness, dependence and overall positive relationship through Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.75, 0.74, 0.69, and 0.80 respectively. The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.83. Meslesh (1981) obtained the validity of the questionnaire through construct validity of 0.82. The validity of this questionnaire was calculated using the correlation coefficients of each question with the total score and it showed that all questions have a significant correlation with the total score.

**Connor and Davidson Resilience Questionnaire (2003):** The Connor-Davidson Resilience Questionnaire is a 25-question instrument that measures the construct of resilience on a five-point Likert scale from zero to four. The minimum resilience score of the subject in this scale is zero and the maximum score is 100. This questionnaire has seven factors (competence of items 11, 17 and 25, personal strength of items 2, 5, 14 and 24, trust in personal instincts of items 4, 10, 12, 20 and 26, tolerance of negative emotions of items 1, 7, 8, 15 and 23, positive acceptance of emotions 6, 16 and 18, safe relationships of items 13 and 19, control of spirituality items 3, 9, 21 and 22). Connor and Davidson (2003) reported the reliability of the questionnaire based on Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. The reliability of this questionnaire in the present study was reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.85. Connor and Davidson (2003) reported the validity of the questionnaire in their research with the help of structural analysis as 0.81. The validity of this questionnaire was calculated using the correlation coefficients of each question with the total score and it showed that all questions have a significant correlation with the total score.

**Solution-oriented group counseling protocol:** In this research, solution-oriented group counseling was offered to women during 8 sessions of 90 minutes (two months). Among the contents of this protocol, there is a summary of the content of getting to know each other and building a good relationship, the importance and purpose of the solution-oriented group

counseling, and the client's problems are formulated in the form of a group counseling approach. Reviewing the goals and general logic of solution-oriented group counseling, establishing communication and initial assessment, stating the rules of the group (confidentiality, confidentiality, respect and listening, etc.), recognizing the client's current problem, assessment. Identification of illogical thoughts and cognitive distortions, strategies for controlling negative thoughts, replacing them with positive thoughts and their techniques, the impact of stress on mental and oral health, familiarity with coping with stress, etc. (Riahinia, 2016).

## Results

The results of data normality test are presented in Table 1. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the level of significance for the variables of job burnout and resilience is greater than 0.05, so the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic for the variables is not significant at the 0.05 error level, and according to this, the distribution of the variables is normal. .

**Table 1.** Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results for normal distribution assumption

| Variable           | Group        | K-S value | p     |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Job burnout</b> | Experimental | 0.12      | 0.20  |
|                    | Control      | 0.197     | 0.123 |
| <b>Resilience</b>  | Experimental | 0.162     | 0.20  |
|                    | Control      | 0.217     | 0.055 |

**Table 2.** Adjusted indicators related to each of the components of job burnout in the subjects of the experimental and control groups in the post-test phase

| Variable                       | Experimental |       | Control |       |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------|---------|-------|
|                                | Mean         | SD    | Mean    | SD    |
| <b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>    | 23.30        | 0.483 | 27.60   | 0.481 |
| <b>Depersonalization</b>       | 13.80        | 0.394 | 17.80   | 0.284 |
| <b>Personal Accomplishment</b> | 19.20        | 0.648 | 23.70   | 0.547 |

The findings showed that the average adjusted score of each component of job burnout, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and individual performance in the test group subjects in the post-test phase is lower than the control group subjects.

**Table 3.** Summary of the results of multivariate covariance analysis on post-test scores of each job burnout component

| Effect | Test               | Value | F     | Hypothesis DF | Error DF | P     | Effect size |
|--------|--------------------|-------|-------|---------------|----------|-------|-------------|
| Group  | Pillai's trace     | 0.792 | 29.19 | 3             | 23       | 0.001 | 0.792       |
|        | Wilks' lambda      | 0.208 | 29.19 | 3             | 23       | 0.001 | 0.792       |
|        | Hotelling's trace  | 3.80  | 29.19 | 3             | 23       | 0.001 | 0.792       |
|        | Roy's largest root | 3.80  | 29.19 | 3             | 23       | 0.001 | 0.792       |

The results of multivariate covariance analysis on the post-test scores by controlling the pre-test scores of each of the components of job burnout, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and individual performance showed that between the experimental and control groups in terms of at least one of each of the components of burnout. There is a significant difference between job burnout, emotional exhaustion, and individual performance ( $P < 0.001$ ). Personality and individual performance in the subjects of the experimental group are compared to the control group. Therefore, the research hypothesis was confirmed.

**Table 4.** The results of one-way covariance analysis in the MANCOVA text on the post-test scores by controlling the pre-test score of each component of job burnout

| Source | Variable                | SS     | DF | MS     | F     | P     | Effect size |
|--------|-------------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Group  | Emotional Exhaustion    | 124.30 | 1  | 124.30 | 37.60 | 0.001 | 0.601       |
|        | Depersonalization       | 109.40 | 1  | 109.4  | 49.90 | 0.001 | 0.667       |
|        | Personal Accomplishment | 137.30 | 1  | 137.30 | 23.10 | 0.001 | 0.481       |

The results of one-way covariance analysis in MANCOVA showed that in terms of emotional exhaustion ( $F=124.3$  and  $P < 0.0001$ ), depersonalization ( $F=109.4$  and  $P < 0.0001$ ) and individual performance ( $F=137.3$  and  $P < 0.0001$ ) there is a significant difference between the test group and the control group. In other words, solution-oriented group counseling reduces each of the components of job burnout, i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and individual performance in the subjects of the experimental group compared to the control group.

**Table 5.** Adjusted indices related to each of the components of resilience in the subjects of the experimental and control groups in the post-test phase

| Variable                             | Experimental |      | Control |      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|------|---------|------|
|                                      | Mean         | SD   | Mean    | SD   |
| <b>Personal competence</b>           | 8.07         | 0.32 | 6.05    | 0.28 |
| <b>Tenacity</b>                      | 8.93         | 0.32 | 6.80    | 0.24 |
| <b>Trust in one's instincts</b>      | 11.01        | 0.30 | 9.85    | 0.54 |
| <b>Tolerance of negative affect</b>  | 12.36        | 0.27 | 10.10   | 0.31 |
| <b>Positive acceptance of change</b> | 7.17         | 0.27 | 5.36    | 0.21 |
| <b>Secure relationships</b>          | 5.35         | 0.36 | 4.18    | 0.32 |
| <b>Spiritual influences</b>          | 10.54        | 0.59 | 8.32    | 0.52 |

The findings showed that the adjusted average score of each of the components of resilience, i.e. competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships and security control in the subjects of the experimental group in the post-test stage was more than subjects of the control group.

**Table 6.** Summary of multivariate covariance analysis results on post-test scores of resilience components

| Effect | Test               | Value | F     | Hypothesis DF | Error DF | P     | Effect size |
|--------|--------------------|-------|-------|---------------|----------|-------|-------------|
| Group  | Pillai's trace     | 0.864 | 13.59 | 7             | 15       | 0.001 | 0.864       |
|        | Wilks' lambda      | 0.136 | 13.59 | 7             | 15       | 0.001 | 0.864       |
|        | Hotelling's trace  | 6.34  | 13.59 | 7             | 15       | 0.001 | 0.864       |
|        | Roy's largest root | 6.34  | 13.59 | 7             | 15       | 0.001 | 0.864       |

The results of multivariate covariance analysis on the post-test scores by controlling the pre-test score of the components of resilience i.e. competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships and security inhibition showed that between the experimental groups and In terms of at least one of the components of resilience, i.e. competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships and security containment, there is a significant difference at the level ( $P < 0.001$ ) in other words. It can be said that solution-oriented group counseling has a significant effect on the components of resilience, i.e., competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships, and control of security.



**Table 7.** Results of one-way covariance analysis in MANCOVA on post-test scores by controlling the pre-test score of resilience components.

| Source | Variable                      | SS    | DF | MS    | F     | P     | Effect size |
|--------|-------------------------------|-------|----|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Group  | Personal competence           | 23.36 | 1  | 23.36 | 16.98 | 0.001 | 0.447       |
|        | Tenacity                      | 25.94 | 1  | 25.94 | 18.54 | 0.001 | 0.469       |
|        | Trust in one's instincts      | 7.74  | 1  | 7.74  | 6.57  | 0.018 | 0.238       |
|        | Tolerance of negative affect  | 29.27 | 1  | 29.27 | 30.21 | 0.001 | 0.59        |
|        | Positive acceptance of change | 18.71 | 1  | 18.71 | 19.78 | 0.001 | 0.485       |
|        | Secure relationships          | 7.90  | 1  | 7.90  | 4.58  | 0.044 | 0.179       |
|        | Spiritual influences          | 28.25 | 1  | 28.25 | 6.21  | 0.021 | 0.238       |

The results of one-way covariance analysis in the MANCOVA showed that there was a difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of at least one component of resilience, i.e. competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships and security control. There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. In other words, solution-oriented group counseling improves each of the components of resilience, i.e., competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships, and control of security in the subjects of the experimental group compared to the verified group.

## Discussion

The objective of the current study was to examine the impact of solution-oriented group counseling on enhancing job burnout and resilience among working women attending counseling centers in Bushehr. The results indicated that in the post-test phase, the test group subjects exhibited lower average adjusted scores for each component of job burnout, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and individual performance, compared to the control group subjects. Therefore, it can be inferred that solution-oriented group counseling effectively improved all components of job burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and individual performance, among the participants in the experimental group in contrast to the control group. Additionally, the adjusted average scores for each component of resilience, including competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships, and security restraint, were higher in the experimental group subjects during the post-test phase compared to the control group subjects. Consequently, it can be

concluded that solution-oriented group counseling enhances the components of resilience, such as competence, personal strength, trust in personal instincts, tolerance of negative emotions, positive acceptance of emotions, safe relationships, and control of security, among the individuals in the experimental group in comparison to the control group.

The findings of the present study align with the findings of previous investigations conducted by Namdar (2019), Misbah (2019), Derrebi (2019), Mohammadyari (2017), Sadeghi (2015), Iran Mehr (2015), Kadampour (2015), Ayar (2021), Hione (2020), Barry (2016), Hoffman (2015), Thomson (2015), and Marsap (2010). The explanations provided indicated that solution-oriented group counseling, characterized by its brief duration, emphasis on available resources and abilities, and utilization of solution-focused language, has the potential to effectively enhance resilience, particularly among women (De Shazer, 2000, as cited in Hyoue, 2020). Instead of concentrating on damages and problems, solution-oriented group counseling aims to foster positive behaviors and strengthen constructive coping strategies, while also providing an opportunity to access resources, utilize capabilities, and explore potential solutions. This approach acknowledges clients as authorities in their own issues, thereby shifting the power dynamics from consultants as problem solvers to clients as the central figures of expertise and problem-solving. Additionally, the counselor assumes the role of an inquisitive questioner, stimulating clients with a series of inquiries and eliciting their inherent capabilities and abilities (Hoffman, 2020). Solution-oriented counseling is a contemporary therapeutic approach that is regarded as a short-term intervention. It currently has extensive applications globally. The simplicity, short treatment duration, and provision of prompt solutions have contributed to its worldwide popularity, prompting therapists to embrace this approach. Process-oriented counseling is highly beneficial in organizational settings when working with women, given the aforementioned characteristics. Research demonstrates that this approach is straightforward and practical in educational institutions, emerging as an important requirement for school counselors to offer counseling services to women (Iran Mehr, 2015). In organizations, the solution-oriented approach concentrates on motivating women to seek solutions and recognize their internal resources, and school counselors can optimally utilize this approach to enhance their expertise. Therefore, considering the time-limited nature of this approach and the constraints faced by school counselors, its utilization can greatly facilitate the provision of

guidance and counseling services to employees within educational institutions (Iran Mehr, 2015). Conversely, job burnout refers to the diminished capacity of employees to cope with stressful factors, leading to physical and emotional exhaustion. One of the factors that can contribute to burnout in the workplace is stress and its impact on the work environment. Job stress, as a significant source of stress in the lives of many teachers, can trigger burnout reactions and impose numerous consequences and costs on organizations and employees (Akirmak, 2019). On the other hand, resilience encompasses the ability to rebound from persistent and ongoing challenges and the capacity for self-restoration. This human capacity can make him triumphantly overcome unfortunate events and improve his social, academic and professional competence despite being exposed to extreme tensions. Resilience is also a characteristic that varies from person to person and can grow or decrease over time and is formed based on the intellectual and practical self-correction of human beings in the trial and error process of life. Enhancing resilience leads to the growth of students in acquiring better thinking and self-management skills and more knowledge (Alessandri, 2016).

One of the limitations of the study is the restriction of the sample population, which requires caution when generalizing the findings. Additionally, the duration of the training sessions occasionally caused fatigue among the female participants in the experimental group. Hence, it is recommended that programs aimed at enhancing knowledge in the domain of solution-focused group therapy be implemented to assess their impact on alleviating job burnout and promoting resilience among employed women. Furthermore, it is advisable to replicate similar research studies across different statistical populations and geographical regions for the purpose of comparing the outcomes obtained from diverse groups.

### Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

### Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

### Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. The author contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

### Funding

The authors did (not) receive support from any organization for the submitted work.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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