

The Effectiveness of Transactional Analysis on Marital Quality and Positive Thinking of Married Women

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Abstract

Aim: Marriage is a social institution that forms the foundation of relationships and creates family units. The present study was conducted to examine the effect of transactional analysis on marital quality and positive thinking of married women in District 6 of Tehran in 2020.

Methods: This quasi-experimental research was conducted with a pretest-posttest design and included a control group. Among the married women in the 6th district of Tehran who had enrolled in the Institute of Transactional Analysis Training, 34 individuals were selected using Purposive sampling, with 17 randomly assigned to the experimental group and 17 to the control group. The marital quality and positive thinking questionnaires were administered to subjects in the experimental group during the pretest phase, followed by implementing the independent variable (transactional analysis) in the experimental group through 9 three-hour sessions. The control group did not receive any training. After the final session, both groups completed the marital quality and positive thinking questionnaires in the post-test phase. The SPSS 19 software was utilized to conduct the covariance analysis test to analyze the data.

Results: The value of F indicates the effect of transactional analysis training on marital quality ($F=533.862$; $P=0.017$), and positive thinking ($F=14.67$; $P=0.001$) demonstrates the impact of transactional analysis training on positive thinking and marital quality is confirmed after controlling for pretest effects and nuisance variables.

Conclusion: This study reveals that transactional analysis impacts marital quality and positive thinking of married women. One of the most crucial functions of training is the ability to express one's needs to the spouse, leading to improvement in marital quality, specifically by reducing stress and anger. Additionally, by helping individuals identify and manage their emotions, transactional analysis training can help control negative emotions and improve their overall outlook, increasing positive thinking. This positive thinking, achieved through transactional analysis training, can improve individuals' mental and emotional well-being and reconstruct their damaged spirits.

Keywords: Transactional analysis, Marital quality, Positive thinking, Marriage

Introduction

Marriage is a social institution that forms the basis of relationships and contributes to the establishment of a family unit. This unit has the highest impact on the health of any society, provided that individuals have mental health and desirable relationships with each other (Munoz-Dardé, & Martin, 2023). The quality and stability of marriage are two main aspects that can be examined. The quality of marriage refers to how the relationship between the couple is formed, while the stability of marriage indicates the preservation of the relationship over time. Factors such as personal information and differences between men and women, maturity, motivations for marriage, spouse selection conditions, and personality traits are influential in the quality of marriage. Even if a marriage is of the highest quality, it cannot guarantee its sustainability and adjustment over time (Garcia-Hombrados & Özcan, 2023). Marital relationships can be a source of happiness or a major cause of suffering and distress (Blanchflower, & Bryson, 2024). Marital quality not only significantly affects the happiness and well-being of individuals and families but also has numerous benefits for society. If spouses living in a community have warm and intimate relationships, not only do their children learn healthy relationships and live in an atmosphere of love and affection, but society itself will also achieve health and happiness (Murray, Ross, & Cannon, 2021).

Based on the theory of Fincham and Bradbury, marital quality and the level of happiness depend on how couples interact and cope with stressful situations in their lives (Fincham, & Bradbury, 1987). Marital quality is the most crucial aspect of family life, shaping the well-being of individuals. The higher the marital quality, the lower the depression, the greater the self-esteem, and the fewer physical illnesses (Banaha, Pasha, Bakhtiari, Omidvar, & Behmanesh, 2023). Allendorf & Ghimire conducted a study on marital quality. This research, which was carried out on a wide scale in Nepal, analyzed marital quality in five dimensions, namely sexual satisfaction, communication, togetherness, problem-solving, and facing disagreements (Allendorf, & Ghimire, 2013). In addition, factors such as gender, level of education, time of marriage, and choice of spouse were important factors in the dimensions of marital quality. Particularly in men, the level of education and longer duration of marriage had an impact on marital quality. On the other hand, social class, occupation, age, and number of children had a minor effect on marital quality (Bahrami, Armanmehr, Rezaeian, Alami, & Kharazmi, 2021).

Results of a study demonstrated that positive thinking skills training has a different and significant impact on various marital groups (Kianpour Barjoe, Amini, Keykhosrovani, & Shafiabadi, 2022). Positive emotions play an essential role in individuals' psychological and physical well-being. Positive psychotherapy, based on traditional scientific methods, is designed to understand and diagnose psychological behavior. This approach emphasizes positive processes and individuals' abilities and recommends therapists pay attention to the positive processes that rarely occur in their clients' lives. Various studies have examined and investigated the impact of positive psychotherapy on improving psychological problems (van Zyl, Gaffaney, van der Vaart, Dik, & Donaldson, 2023). Research evidence shows that positive psychotherapy effectively increases mental health and hope, enhances relationships and positive emotions, achievement motivation, self-respect, and happiness while reducing premenstrual syndrome symptoms and anxiety symptoms (Mahmoudi, & Khoshakhlagh, 2018). In transactional analysis, human personality is composed of three ego states: parent, child, and adult. Because all states of the ego are considered subsets of it, when employed in an appropriate situation, they bring about balance (Vos & van Rijn, 2021).

Transactional analysis is both a personality theory and a systematic approach to interpersonal therapy, based on the assumption that our current decisions are based on past assumptions. These assumptions may once have been suitable for our survival but may no longer be accurate. Transactional analysis emphasizes cognitive and behavioral aspects of the therapeutic process (Corey, 2013). Research findings indicate that training in the concepts of transactional analysis will have a significant impact on increasing the intimacy of couples, and this effect will persist for three months. These results demonstrate that group training in transactional analysis can enhance social intimacy by expanding interpersonal relationship skills (Alkasir, Jafarian Dehkordi, Mohammadkhani, Soleimani Sefat, & Atadokht, 2017; Safinia, Ebrahimi Moghadam, & Abolmaali, 2021). The findings demonstrate that employing Mindfulness-integrated transactional analysis therapy can improve the overall quality of marriage for women who are dependent on their partners (Sharifi, Fatehizade, Bahrami, Jazayeri, & Etemadi, 2019). This type of therapy has been shown to enhance the quality of life and decrease dissatisfaction with marriage among divorced women living in Kashan City (Boostani, 2023). Another study revealed that participants in the experimental group had notably higher scores in emotional expression and overall relationship adjustment in both the post-test and follow-up assessments compared to those in the control group. Therefore, it appears that Transactional Analysis group therapy may be an effective method for boosting marital adjustment (Sedighi, Makvand Hoseini, Qanbari Hashem Abad, Mohebi Anabat, & Hokm

Abadi, 2018). However, there has been limited research conducted on transactional analysis. Previous research has focused on the impact of transactional analysis on men or couples, with less attention paid to married women. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effect of transactional analysis on the marital quality and positive thinking of married women.

Method

The research method employed in this study is a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest and control group. The sample size for experimental and quasi-experimental studies is 30 individuals. The target population consists of married women in District 6 of Tehran in 2020. Purposive sampling was used to choose 34 qualified students for the study. These students were then divided randomly into an experimental group and a control group, with 17 participants in each group. The sample size for the study was determined to be adequate using Gpower software, with a statistical power of 0.90, an effect size of 1.04, and a significance level of 0.05 (Sabzipour, Mousavi, & Shahsavari, 2023). In the first stage, convenience sampling was used, where 34 married women were selected, and in the second stage, random assignment was conducted, with 17 individuals assigned to the experimental group and 17 individuals to the control group. The criteria for entering this study are as follows: being married, having more than one child, not having a spouse who is addicted or incarcerated, and being married for at least three years. The criteria for exiting the study are dissatisfaction, incomplete questionnaires, withdrawal from completing the questionnaire during the implementation, and absence from more than three sessions in the training approach.

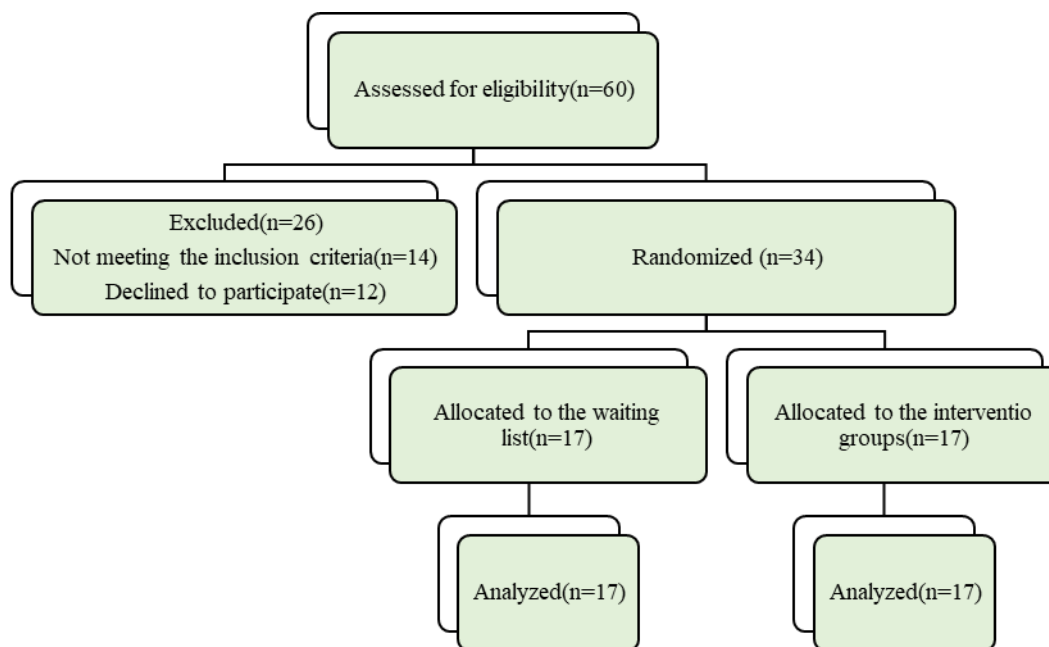


Figure1: Consort diagram

Instruments

Positive Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (ATQ-P): The Ingram and Wisnicki questionnaire consists of 30 five-option questions, and it has been validated and scored. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 and split-half reliability of 0.95 (Ingram, Kendall, Siegle, Guarino, & McLaughlin, 1995). The responses to the questions are on a five-option Likert scale (always=5, often=4, sometimes=3, rarely=2, never=1). The minimum score for each participant is 30, and the maximum score is 150. The average score for a participant is 90. The closer the total score of a participant is to 150, the higher their positive thinking. Additionally, In Iran, the reliability of this questionnaire was determined based on Cronbach's alpha (0.94) and the split-half method (0.95) (Mahmoudi, Gheisari, & Rabbanizadeh, 2021).

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS): This scale was developed by Busby, Crane, Larson, and Christensen in 1995 and is used to measure marital relationship quality. This questionnaire consists of 14 items and three subscales: consensus (6 items), satisfaction (5 items), and cohesion (3 items), which together indicate marital quality, with higher scores indicating higher marital quality. The original form of this scale

has 32 items. The questionnaire is scored on a 6-point Likert scale (we always disagree = 0, and we always agree = 5). In Iranian study, the RDAS and its subscales revealed satisfactory internal consistency that ranged from 0.664 to 0.847 (Maroufizadeh, Omani-Samani, Hosseini, Almasi-Hashiani, Sepidarkish, & Amini, 2020).

Procedure

Forty married women from District 6 of Tehran were selected through convenience sampling. Among these, 20 were individuals who wanted to attend the transactional analysis course at "Pendar" institute from 15th May to 10th July 2016, and 20 were individuals who did not intend to participate in this course. Due to dropouts, the number of participants decreased to 34, with 17 in the experimental group and 17 in the control group. Both groups underwent a pre-test and were given questionnaires on marital quality and positive thinking to fill out. Then, the experimental group received training on transactional analysis in nine 3-hour sessions held weekly on Sundays. After the final session, a post-test was conducted, and the participants filled out the questionnaires on marital quality and positive thinking. Simultaneously, a post-test was also conducted on the control group. The personal information of the participants remained confidential in this study. The results of the marital quality questionnaire of the participants remained confidential. The extracted data from the questionnaires in the four groups (pre-test for positive thinking, pre-test for marital quality, post-test for positive thinking, and post-test for marital quality) were categorized and analyzed using multivariate analysis of covariance with the help of SPSS19 software.

Table 1. Summary of transactional analysis sessions of Data Analysis

Sessions	objectives	Training content	Tasks
1	Introducing transactional analysis and its foundations. Understanding one's psychological states. Recognizing the three dimensions of adult, parent, and child. Distinguishing between a controlling parent and a nurturing parent, and between a natural child and an adaptable child.	Introduction and welcome remarks. Allowing time for the participants to get acquainted with each other. Pre-testing (administering questionnaires on marital quality and positive thinking). Introducing the books "Transactional Analysis" by Ian Stewart and "What Do You Say After You Say Hello?" by Eric Berne. Defining transactional analysis and introducing its founder. Explaining the stages of change and barriers to change. The pattern of psychological states and analysis of psychological states' actions.	Creating a table and documenting the times when one of the three dimensions of parent, adult, and child becomes prominent.
2	The ability to shift from a controlling parent and an adaptable child to an adult. Being present in the moment and making decisions in the moment.	Explanation of the methods of shifting to adulthood and making adult decisions.	Practicing shifting from being a negative adaptable child to an adult. Imposing a penalty on oneself when judging others.
3	Teaching healthy and constructive communication with spouse and others (parallel transactions) and avoiding crossed transactions and relationships with hidden messages that lead to conflicts.	Explanation of different types of mutual relationships and healthy and constructive communication.	Discovering one's crossed transactions with others and with one's spouse.
4	Having the ability to stroke oneself, others, and one's spouse, as well as receiving stroke from others and one's spouse. Eliminating stroke filters and writing a contract with one's spouse to eliminate psychological games and crossed transactions.	Explanation of the contract technique. Characteristics of the contract. Stroke. Stroke bank, stroke filters and stroke economy.	Preparing a notebook and defining one's inner and outer beauties for one month. Removing stroke filters and filling one's stroke bank. Saying "no" to two flattery strokes.
5	Teaching the skills of eliminating scripts and finding inner child securities, and working on loser securities.	Explanation of scripts. Determining factors of life scripts. Anti-life script. Types of script and inner child securities.	Making a puzzle of childhood securities and finding the loser pieces in it.

6	Finding drivers and working on them. Accepting the fact that all humans are good.	Explanation of four states. Definition of drivers. Description of drivers. Providing a test to identify drivers.	Giving exercises to get out of the situations "I am not good, you are good", "I am not good, you are not good", "I am good, you are not good". Working on one's drivers by taking practical actions.
7	Identifying one's and others' games and using antitheses to eliminate them.	Explanation of the Karpman triangle Explanation of psychological games. Features of psychological games. Sociology of psychological games and types of psychological games.	Finding one's and others' games and using antitheses to eliminate them.
8	Discovering people, objects, and things that individuals have unhealthy dependence to, and practicing to eliminate these unhealthy dependences.	Explanation of destructive emotions (such as anger, sadness, and indifference). Explanation of stamp. Explanation of coexistence (dependence) and its types. Engaging in games for unhealthy dependence.	Writing down one's dependencies, practical action to eliminate unhealthy dependencies.
9	Finding script injunctions and working on them	Explanation of time management and its types, explanation of script injunctions. Providing a test to identify one's own injunctions.	Taking practical steps to work on one's injunctions. Conducting a post-test by providing questionnaires on marital quality and positive thinking.

The current study's findings were analyzed using descriptive and inferential methods. Descriptive analysis involved utilizing indices such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and tables. On the other hand, inferential analysis utilized the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) method with the assistance of SPSS 19 software, focusing on hypotheses and research design. Initially, the assumptions for covariance analysis were assessed, which included randomness of sampling, normal distribution, homogeneity of variances, lack of correlation between nuisance variables, and homogeneity of regression slopes. Following this, the hypotheses were detailed. In the interpretation of the hypotheses, a significance level below 0.05 indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level with a 5% error rate, demonstrating a significant impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Conversely, a significance level above 0.05 signified the acceptance of the null hypothesis and rejection of the alternative hypothesis at a 95% confidence level with a 5% error rate, illustrating no significant impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Results

Descriptive findings demonstrated that the majority of married women participating in this study were between the ages of 30 and 40 (59%). 24% were younger than 30, and 17% were above 40. Most of the married women participating in this study had a master's degree (47%). 38% had a bachelor's degree, and 15% had less than a bachelor's degree. 38% had been married for 5 to 10 years, 32% had been married for less than five years, 18% had been married for 10 to 20 years, and 12% had been married for over 20 years. Descriptive findings demonstrated that the majority of married women participating in this study did not have children (53%), 32% of them had one child, 12% had two children, and 3% had more than two children.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables of experimental and control groups at pre-test and post-test stages

Variable	Stage	Control group			Experimental group		
		Mean± Sd	Minimum	Maximum	Mean± Sd	Minimum	Maximum
Positive Thinking	Pre-test	103.3±14.00	71	127	102.65 ±20.12	70	142
Marital Quality		41.94±12.84	21	59	42.71± 14.23	15	66
Positive Thinking	Post-test	102.53±16.07	69	130	116.94±11.06	102	141
Marital Quality		44.06±12.82	25	62	52.35±11.38	19	66

The scores of research variables and statistical information in the pre-test and post-test for the study groups are presented in Table 2. According to the observed results, the mean scores of both the control and experimental groups in the pre-test phase are very close to each other. Specifically, the positive thinking score for the control group is 103.3, and for the experimental group is 102.65. Additionally, the marital quality score for the control group is 41.94, and for the experimental group is 42.71.

According to the results, the mean scores of the experimental group have changed significantly after undergoing the training course, whereas the mean scores of the control group are very close to their pre-test scores. The positive thinking score of the control group, which was 103.3 in the pre-test, decreased to 102.53 in the post-test, while the positive thinking score of the experimental group, which was 102.65 in the pre-test, increased to 116.94 in the post-test. Additionally, the quality of marital life score for the control group, which was 41.94 in the pre-test, increased to 44.6 in the post-test, while the quality of marital life score for the experimental group, which was 42.71 in the pre-test, improved to 52.35 in the post-test.

Table 3. Results of the multivariate analysis of covariance

Source	Dependent variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P-value
Corrected model	Posttest positive thinking	4043.130	3	1347.71	10.597	0.000
Intercept	Posttest positive thinking	2857.696	1	2857.696	22.469	0.000
Pretest positive thinking	Posttest positive thinking	1441.395	1	1441.395	11.333	0.002
Group	Posttest positive thinking	1865.788	1	1865.788	14.670	0.001
Error	Posttest positive thinking	3815.487	30	127.183		
Total	Posttest positive thinking	417281.000	34			
Corrected total	Posttest positive thinking	7858.618	33			
Corrected model	Posttest marital quality	2776.292	3	925.431	11.055	0.000
Intercept	Posttest marital quality	246.805	1	246.805	2.948	0.096
Pretest marital quality	Posttest marital quality	849.836	1	849.836	10.152	0.003
Group	Posttest marital quality	533.862	1	533.862	6.378	0.017
Error	Posttest marital quality	2511.267	30	83.709		
Total	Posttest marital quality	84297.000	34			
Corrected total	Posttest marital quality	5287.559	33			

The findings in Table 3 show that training in transactional analysis has a significant impact on marital quality and positive thinking. After accounting for pretest effects and nuisance variables, the F value for marital quality was 533.862 with a significance level of 0.017, and for positive thinking it was 14.67 with a significance level of 0.001.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the impact of transactional analysis training on marital quality and positive thinking. The findings indicated a significant impact of transactional analysis on positive thinking in married women. This study aimed to examine the impact of transactional analysis training on marital quality and positive thinking. The findings indicated a significant impact of transactional analysis on positive thinking in married women. The results also revealed a significant effect of transactional analysis on married women's marital quality. These results are consistent with previous studies such as Alkasir et al (2017), Safinia et al (2021), Vos, & van Rijn (2021), McLean (2023), and Boostani, (2023).

According to previous researches, transactional analysis approach has been found to result in increased satisfaction, compatibility, positive emotions, and intimacy among couples who have experienced emotional divorce. It has also been associated with a decrease in marriage instability, depression, and anxiety in comparison to a control group during the post-test and follow-up stages (Khajevand Khoshli, 2019; Boostani, 2023). Transactional Analysis principles can improve couples' communication, problem-solving and emotional skills, positive intentions and motivations, cognitive functions, self-disclosure, and intimacy (Safinia, et al, 2021). Simultaneously, it fosters individualism and self-fulfillment, aiding individuals in attaining independence and self-victory and breaking free from ineffective and destructive communication patterns (Vos, & van Rijn, 2021). By abandoning irresponsibility and disappointment caused by ineffective strategies, this therapeutic approach instills hope and goodwill towards oneself, others, and the world, leading to a healthier life during an intra-personal and inter-personal transformation process (McLean, 2023).

The research findings can be described as follows: marital satisfaction consists of various dimensions and can be measured through evaluating interactions between couples, such as mutual interest, taking care of each other, accepting one another, understanding and coordinating with each other in activities such as spending leisure time, dividing tasks, sexual relationships, expressing emotions, and the quality of communication (Murray et al., 2021). Communication occurs at both verbal and non-verbal levels, and one of the main reasons for marital conflicts is the inconsistency of messages transmitted simultaneously through these two levels, leading to a fragile marital quality (Vos, & van Rijn, 2021). Therefore, to improve our relationships, we must first gain awareness and understanding of our characteristics, beliefs, thoughts, and convictions. An ideal and stable

individual can easily transition from one state to another based on specific circumstances (Showry & Manasa, 2014).

A stable person is mature, realistic, logical, and responsible and avoids games that involve transferring responsibility and life problems onto others. A stable individual from a parental standpoint is caring and cultured, preserving valuable traditions from the past. From a child's perspective, a stable person is self-motivated, joyful, and playful (Boostani, 2023). Married women can improve their marital quality by using transactional analysis techniques, such as changing their scripts (injunctions and drivers), being mature, having parallel transactions with their spouses that lead to balance in marital relationships, stroking themselves and their spouses, understanding their own and their spouse's games, and having a healthy coexistence (Davis, Jowett, Sörman, & Ekelund, 2022). When married women emphasize their adult state, solve problems like adults, and view their life issues maturely, they can let go of the past and the future and make decisions in the present moment (Yazdani, Mousavi, Alipour, & Rafiey, 2021). This ultimately enhances their marital quality by using shifting methods to become adults, including using their five senses, being present in the moment, thinking, questioning themselves (why, how, for what reason, etc.), and having intention and purpose (McLean, 2023). Women who become aware of their personality states improve their communication with their spouse and increase their ability to resolve their marital conflicts, thus improving their marital satisfaction. When women eliminate their own, their spouse's, and others' mental games through antitheses in transactional analysis, the crossed transactions in their marriage disappear and are replaced by a parallel and balanced transaction, which increases their marital quality. Women learn through transactional analysis that if they change themselves, their spouses will also change, and this impacts their marital quality (Boostani, 2023).

These findings suggest that effective communication promotes flourishing and improves the quality of interpersonal relationships, while ineffective communication hinders flourishing and damages relationships (Davis, Jowett, Sörman, & Ekelund, 2022). In this regard, it seems that many destructive relationships originate from conflicts and subsequent negative attitudes derived from women's mental, psychological, and thought patterns (Sharifi, et al., 2019). This is because thinking style determines the quality of life. Positivity refers to having positive attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors in life. Positivity includes both positive thinking and positive actions (Almeida, & Ifrim, 2023). Emphasizing positivity does not mean negating psychological pathology, but the point here is that positive thoughts and emotions and their unparalleled effects on mental and physical health have been neglected (Kianpour Barjoe et al., 2022). When women learn to live in the present moment and let go of past experiences and parental messages, they find a positive view of their spouse and marriage. If married women nurture their spouse's stroke bank and consistently stroke them positively, they will receive positive strokes from their spouse in return, and their positive thinking will increase (Mahmoudi & Khoshakhlagh, 2018).

Conclusion

Transactional analysis affects the marital quality and the positive thinking of married women. One of the most crucial functions of training is expressing needs to the spouse, which increases marital quality, especially in terms of reducing stress and anger. It also helps the individual control unpleasant emotions and strengthen their positive spirit by recognizing their feelings, increasing positive thinking. Positive thinking improves individuals' mental and emotional health and helps reconstruct their damaged spirits through transactional analysis training. In analyzing relationships, more attention is paid to human interactions, and the belief is that if individuals have healthy, positive, and satisfying relationships with each other and replace destructive, negative, and demeaning relationships, they will be able to reduce their own and others' psychological pressures and enjoy life more. The ultimate goal of transactional analysis is to achieve self-determination through awareness, mental health, and self-motivation. .

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