



PROMOTING GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY EDUCATION IN IRAN: CHALLENGES, ADAPTATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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WHY GROUP THERAPY MATTERS

- Growing demand for psychodynamic group therapy in Iran
- Common themes:
 - o Grief
 - o Family conflict
 - o Mistrust
 - o Sociopolitical stress

GRIEF IN A RESTRICTED SOCIETY

- Unfinished mourning processes
- COVID-19: vaccine bans, disrupted funerals
- Women, Life, Freedom movement: traumatic losses
- Ukrainian plane tragedy: fear among diaspora
- Chronic grief & emotional disconnection

FAMILY CONFLICT AS A MIRROR OF SOCIETY

- Parents internalizing authoritarian values
- Double standards: moral speech vs. unethical behavior
- Controlling parenting styles
- Deep generational tension

INTERPERSONAL MISTRUST & SURVEILLANCE CULTURE

- Fear of being watched
- Confidentiality often not trusted emotionally
- Surveillance (e.g., hijab law enforcement)
- Participants operate from paranoid-schizoid position (Klein)

THE FALSE SELF IN GROUP THERAPY

- Self-disclosure used to present ideal image
- Cultural pressure to appear “acceptable”
- Participants entering group with a false self (Winnicott)
- Challenge: building real trust takes time

TRAINING, SUPERVISION, AND ETHICS

- Lack of structured training pathways
- Minimal access to supervision
- No national oversight or ethical body
- Risks to both therapists and clients

DISRUPTIONS AND DIGITAL LIMITATIONS

- Internet blackouts during political unrest
- Session canceled during Iran–Israel conflict
- Filtering affects group participation and therapist training
- Instability creates additional insecurity

MOVING FORWARD: ETHICAL AND SAFE TRAINING

- Need for safe learning environments
- Clear, culturally adapted ethical guidelines
- Professional development must be protected

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN TRAINING

- Learning by doing: psychodrama and group analysis
- Builds emotional insight, confidence, and flexibility
- Helps therapists work with real group dynamics

PSYCHODRAMA AS A CULTURAL & THERAPEUTIC BRIDGE

- Dominant culture limits role expression
 - Psychodrama supports freedom, creativity, emotional release
 - Helps participants try new roles, break identity scripts
 - Especially powerful in restrictive societies
 - Deep heritage: storytelling, poetry, theater
 - Art not previously integrated into therapy
 - Now being reclaimed as a therapeutic tool
- dynamics

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

- Partnerships with IAGP and others
- Training in:
 - o Psychodrama
 - o Group analysis
 - o Family therapy
 - o Ethics

WHY COLLABORATION MATTERS

- Cultural adaptation of international models
- Therapists empowered with tools to address local realities
- Connection beyond borders
- Emotional and professional isolation of Iranian therapists
- Collaboration brings mentorship, knowledge, and hope
- Internet challenges remain, but bridges are being built



THANK YOU

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