

## INTERVIEWS

# The State of Solution Focused Practices and Research in Iran: Interview With Dr Roghieh Nooripour

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This paper presents the interview conducted by Andreea Žak (JSFP research editor) and Mark McKergow (JSFP editor) with Dr Roghieh Nooripour about the state of solution focused (SF) practices and research in Iran. The idea of the interview appeared following the [Scoping review](#) published in the JSFP which showed Iran as the leading country where research was published in 2022 according to the [SFA PubList by EBTA](#). Dr Nooripour was kind enough to talk to us and share the information she had on the introduction, spread, research and application of SF in Iran. [Chinese traditional](#) [Chinese simplified](#)

Roghieh Nooripour, Assistant Professor, Department of Counseling, Qazvin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qazvin, Iran, e-mail: [nooripour@iau.ir](mailto:nooripour@iau.ir), [nooripour.r@gmail.com](mailto:nooripour.r@gmail.com)

Dr Roghieh Nooripour is a highly accomplished scholar and researcher in counselling psychology. She holds a Ph.D. in Counselling from Alzahra University, Tehran and has completed post-doctoral studies there. She has been recognized for her exceptional research abilities as a distinguished research student. She was a Visiting Scholar at the University of California, San Diego, USA, funded by Iran's National Elites Foundation. Dr Nooripour's research interests span various areas, including mindfulness, stress, mental health, quality-of-life interventions, and psychometrics. She has published her work in reputable academic journals and presented her findings at national and international conferences. Dr Nooripour has been a member of Iran's National Elites Foundation. In addition to her research contributions, she is a dedicated educator and mentor, teaching counselling psychology courses and providing supervision to graduate students. Her commitment to improving the lives of individuals and families is reflected in her clinical work and workshops on psychology and mental health. Dr Nooripour's exceptional contributions to the field have earned her recognition, including awards such as the Distinguished Research Student

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and Best Paper awards. Overall, she is a respected figure in counselling psychology, continually advancing knowledge in the field and promoting psychological well-being. [Researchgate profile.](#)

**Roghieh, we would like to start by thanking you for accepting our invitation to give an interview for the Journal of Solution Focused Practices (JSFP). As we have already mentioned in the invitation, we are both impressed by the amount of research conducted and published all across Iran. Could you tell us how did the SF approach started in Iran?**

First, I wish to thank you for this invitation, and I'm so happy that I can talk about solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT). As with many other approaches in Iran, the introduction of the solution-focused approach is the result of collective effort of many trainers and university professors who conducted lots of research and published many papers. It was all due to its significant role especially in promoting mental health, among other significant impacts. This explains the large amount of research made, especially in the clinical setting. In Iran, as in many other Middle East countries we can see a rise in research papers in the last 20 years. I have conducted a literature search and I could not find one single name which stood out. I can assume that the introduction of the SF approach is the product of collaboration of many practitioners, educators, researchers and many other professionals such as counsellors, psychologists or psychiatrics, all working to apply the approach in a cultural sensitive way.

**It sounds like a collective endeavour indeed. We've also noticed as you said that there are many authors who publish collectively. Are there some more prolific authors or renowned authors?**

It is difficult to mention who is the first person who introduced the approach in Iran because many people focused on this approach at the same time. Some of them are more prolific than other. There are many professors in Universities conducting classes and studies on this approach. Yet I prefer to not mention actual names as they are my colleagues. I can say that many people developed the approach in Iran at the same time and worked on its cultural sensitive application and study. Also many have integrated the SF approach with other approaches such as art therapy or music therapy, and compared with cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). I wish also to add that many books have been translated in Iran by many professors.

**Could you mention some of the most popular books that have been translated?**

*Solution Focused Anxiety Management A Treatment and Training Manual* by Ellen Quick (2013), *Solution Focused Brief Therapy in Schools* by Johnny Kim, Michael S. Kelly, and Cynthia Franklin (2017), *Solution-Focused Therapy: Theory, Research & Practice* by Alasdair Macdonald (2011), *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy with Families* by Thorana Nelson (2018), *Solution Focused Narrative Therapy* by Linda Metcalf (2017), and *Mastering The Art Of Solution Focused Counseling* by Jeffrey T. Guterman (2014).

**It is nice to hear that the solution-focused approach is so widely spread across Iran that it is difficult to name one single person. It seems like it has a wide distribution across the country. Is there a particular hotspot for research or application, in some settings or regions?**

The SF approach is widely applied in diverse settings in Iran, such as clinical setting where it is used by mental health professionals or practitioners for various mental health problems. In the educational setting, professors, educators, and counsellors use the approach to address pupils' behaviour or as a teaching aid. Some community services rely on SFBT to empower people and families who face social problems. Also in the organisational setting it is used by managers and job counsellors. Universities, such as Tehran University or Shahid Beheshti University, play a significant role for teaching the approach. I see that many of my colleagues use the translated books to teach students and also we conduct many workshops on SFBT at university level. For professionals such as counsellors, psychologists or psychiatrists the Iranian Association of Psychology offer support for the use of this approach in practice. Research centres in many universities focus on mental health or counselling or psychology services. They researched the application of SFBT for improving, for example, mental health, alongside other approaches. Yet I can see that some Iranian research centres are more focused on the SF approach. Nowadays many people use this approach in their life. I personally work in a counselling centre and I can see that many people from diverse fields of education such as engineering or medical studies have also read solution-focused books and apply the approach in their life. Many educated people in Iran are familiar with this approach and try to use it in their lives.

**It seems it's very widespread in various governmental institutions such as counselling centres, community centres, universities. Does this mean that it is officially recognised as a therapeutic approach or psychotherapeutic approach? If yes, is it recognized as an approach per se or under the systemic approach umbrella?**

SFBT does not have an official recognition or recommendation for psychotherapy or social work practice. Nevertheless its increase use suggests a growing acceptance and effectiveness. Many Persian or Farsi papers focus on this approach due to many reasons, such as its content which is focused on families, on solutions, not just on problems. Many couple therapists or marital therapists use this approach in their research or clinical application. We know that there are many other approaches used by many other professionals. Nevertheless many approaches are not sensitive to the culture so we cannot use them for family or couple therapy. In turn in Iran we have much research focused on the application of SFBT for marital satisfaction or adjustment, marital motivation or quality of life. Many professionals are familiar with this approach, not limited to counsellors or psychologists. Therefore we have many Farsi or Persian resources, papers and books.

**It looks like the SF approach is much known in Iran in various environments. Is this something specific to this approach or is it similar to the spread of other approaches, such as narrative therapy or CBT or maybe emotion-focused therapy (EFT)?**

I can say that SFBT is as well-known as CBT. Many people know both SFBT and CBT. Currently many researches prefer to combine SFBT with CBT or EFT. I cannot say which of them is more famous among Iranian people because each of these approaches has their own fans which studied and used the approach in their professional work. Nevertheless I think that it is widely known by professionals such as educators, counsellors, psychiatrists and psychologists. From papers I can see that many prefer to combine SFBT with CBT, EFT or other approaches.

**You mentioned about comparative research additional to its application in various settings. What does the research show about the effectiveness of the SF approach in Iran?**

I read a lot of papers and PhD or master theses which focused on the effectiveness of the SF approach or compared the effectiveness with CBT or EFT. There are many papers on the effectiveness of SFBT in Iran. [The majority are published in Farsi language](#), for some of them the abstract is translated into English. The research on effectiveness has been performed primary in hospital centres or social services. Also many researchers use the SF approach in the research setting. Despite the fact that the approach is not officially recognized, the positive outcomes indicated by the evidence-based research, the professional training and education available with information on application guidelines, and the collaboration between many researchers support the use of this approach in research, clinical and university settings, and also as a psychotherapeutic approach. I personally use the SFBT in adoption and mental health of adolescents from correction centres.

**As a practitioner yourself, how do you find the clients respond to the SF approach?**

Through my experience during [my research on SFBT among adolescents from correction centres](#) I could see that adolescents have good acceptance for this approach as applied in group format. While applying this approach I focused on adolescent's strengths and shaping their own solutions. It was very interesting for me to see how teens with high behavioural risk welcomed the collaboration with their counsellor or psychologist, which worked on their strengths, not on their weaknesses. It was very interesting for me that they have a focus on emotional exploration and welcome this approach.

**You mentioned guidelines for applying the SF approach. Are these guidelines straightforwardly SF or are they adapted to the cultural context?**

I used such guidelines with my colleagues during research. For this purpose we used Farsi books and other Iranian references. It was very important for us that the application is based on culture. Therefore we used many books for the protocol. One of such a protocol was based on the book *More than*

*Miracles. The State of the Art of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy* authored by De Shazer, Dolan, Korman, Trepper, McCollum and Berg (2007). We used the translated version of this book while working with adolescents in the correction centres.

**Did you make adjustments to the protocols?**

We used the protocol just for some tasks, for example talking about emotions, talking about future, or talking about their parents. We talked about their imagination about their future life, as the adolescents were living in a correction centre at the time of research. We read many protocols and decided to use this one to talk about their future life, future career. We did not make major changes because we did not want to change the protocol.

**In research there is a high tendency for studying the effectiveness of SF in group format – even when examining efficacy for couple therapy. Is this something that’s prevalent in practice, or it is just specific for research?**

I think they use the SFBT in group contexts without changing it much, both in research and in their practice. Maybe they have their own reasons for doing that.

**Is there a national association or something similar where SF people come together?**

Yes, there are many non-governmental institutions working on this matter. Like many other approaches, SFBT has its own fans so we can see a multitude of people working on this matter. I can’t mention exact names. As an Iranian counselling psychologist I can see there are many people and institutions working in Iran, especially in Tehran using CBT and SFBT. There is no institution that focuses only on SFBT. There are many institutions that welcomed the SF approach alongside other approaches. Due to the fact that the Iranian culture and context is based on family and community – the society is collectivistic – there are many institutions that use SFBT.

**What do you think is the secret? There is so much research being done at an academic level! What would be a good-practice recommendation for interested practitioners and researchers around the globe to achieve a similar level?**

SFBT has shown effectiveness in addressing a wide range of mental health issues in a very brief time. So it’s a very attractive subject for research due to its practicality and efficiency in a short time. Also SFBT can be used in many diverse settings; so many researchers have the opportunity to use it in various contexts such as clinical or organizational. It’s not limited – it can be applied for a diversity of populations. For this approach we can see evidence based practice from research and literature, on how SFBT helps people change their behaviour. Also SFBT focuses on empowerment, collaboration, and client’s strengths. I think many people use the SF approach in research due to these factors.

**What are your best hopes for the future of SFBT in Iran and also internationally?**

My best hopes for the approach is that SFBT gain more health professionals both in Iran and worldwide. As more practitioners become more familiar with the principles or techniques they can apply it for better client's outcomes. Also culture-sensitive adjustment of SFBT is very important for its effective use in Iran. I hope that more and more Iranian practitioners will use it in a culturally sensitive way and work aligned with the cultural values of the local population and the essence of SFBT. And finally, I hope for more professional formation and educational trainings for practitioners, therapists, counsellors and psychologists. I hope to see the establishment of more programmes in Iran to meet the growing demand for upskills. I hope that we use the SFBT for all mental health issues because it can be used to empower clients and it was shown to be useable for diverse populations and problems, for example from the clinical, school or organizational setting. I hope I can see its development in various settings such as educational, social service and many other both in Iran and internationally. Research and practice application showed its efficiency in the Iranian context. So I hope that more and more clinicians and therapists use this approach in their professional work.

**You mentioned the necessity for a culturally sensitive application of the approach; what cultural adaptations would you recommend?**

It is very important that we focus on cultures, values and norms of each society. For example, when using the miracle question I try to focus more and more on the culture. For every culture it is important that we recognize culture's key points when working to empower people. In the Iranian culture it is very important that we don't neglect the family, meaning that we should meet the individual together with his family and work not only on empowering the individual, but also on empowering the family. This is due to the fact that in the Iranian context the family has a strong influence on the individual and thus we shouldn't neglect it. For example, when using the miracle question it is very important that we don't neglect the family. I myself use the family in my professional setting.

**Is there something else which we should know about the application of the SF approach in Iran and something which you would like to share with the world?**

You know, for me it is very important that we understand how SFBT aligns with cultures, values, believes. These cultural aspects are very important in communication with all parts of the family structure and in the help seeking behaviour. For example, we should highlight how SFBT can blend with cultural practices and values, and is very important to show for whom it is acceptable. Also, if we could have a platform where we could share our insight about challenges and successes of the use of SFBT this could provide us valuable lessons for other similar cultures and contexts. This includes considering several barriers such as limited resources or stigma which are important for the help seeking behaviours. Another thing is that providing information through workshops and courses on SFBT in online or other

formats could be very valuable for professionals, students and also for organizations which are interested to learn more and more about this approach. For future practitioners and researchers is very important that we have case studies and their outcomes following the SFBT intervention to see what are the successes and failures.

One last thing, we could also emphasize opportunities for collaboration and exchange on SFBT research and practice between Iran and other countries. We could have some platform to share experience and learning, and have academic interactions. This could promote both international and Iranian practitioners who have used SFBT in their work. Also we could have some conferences or research collaboration projects that focus just on SFBT in individual or group format. I think these aspects are very important and could help more people interested in SFBT.

**Is there something else which we didn't ask and would be worth asking?**

This is a great opportunity for me to talk about SFBT. I teach in a university, so we can have collaborations. For example for my bachelor students' classes we can anticipate if they are interested in learning SFBT. For students it would be very interesting to have the opportunity to hear about the SFBT from international trainers even during online webinars. The majority of them have no lack of information of CBT because there are many books and webinars. If students at the bachelor level get familiar with the SFBT, they will be more likely to learn more and more for their master or PhD levels. Currently they do not have many webinars on SFBT.

**Thank you very much.**

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