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The Effectiveness of Instructing Emotion-focused Approach in Improving The marital Satisfaction in Couples

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Abstract

Emotion-focused Treatment (EFT) is a short-term and structured approach in Couples Therapy which is based on clear and evident concepts of marital desperation, affections recognition, adulthood love, and emotional responses. According to this outlook, marital agitation is formed and continues by widespread states of negative affection and attachment damages, lack of concern toward needs and internal wishes, negative interactional prototypes, and unsuitable emotional experience. The present study has been conducted for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of employing emotion-focused approach in couple's marital satisfaction. The population of this study includes couples Family Counseling Center of Education District 5 Tehran who have been married at least for three and at most for six years. Forty people (20 couples) were chosen by simple randomization and were randomly divided into two groups (one as experimental and the other one as control group). The experimental group was exposed to emotion-focused Couples Therapy intervention for eight sessions with duration of each session being ninety minutes. Meanwhile, the control group was put on the waiting list. Both groups were evaluated again after eight weeks. T-test and analysis of covariance were used for the data analysis. The results of the study indicated that the emotion-focused intervention has been effective in increasing the indicators of marital satisfaction in couples. Also, the findings of the study revealed a significant difference between women and men in emotion-focused experimental group and those in the control group.

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Keyword: Couples Therapy - emotion-focused approach- marital satisfaction;

Introduction:

The health and prosperity of the family depends on the healthy and rich relationships. If the family's foundation is not firm enough, the negative consequences would be varieties of physical and mental problems. Satisfactory relationships are beneficial to the couples in many ways. Among these advantages are: an increase in couples' and their children's physical and mental health, and also an increase in their flexibility when faced with problems in life (Halford, 2000). Couples Therapy is concerned with making a change toward compatible marital Process, which includes: observable interaction and increasing more positive outcomes resulting from a relationship (Halford, 2000). One of the methods for Couples Therapy is emotion-focused approach. Johnson and Greenberg introduced

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their remedial interventions and methods in nine steps in 1985 (Johnson and Greenberg 1996, in Johnson and Wifen, 1999). In this model, it is assumed that the mental and interpersonal status of couples in their interactions is governed by each of the couples' individual emotional experiences. The basis of emotion-focused approach is individual growth and the individual's balance is the main goal of the treatment (Johnson, 2004). The fundamental hypothesis of this approach is that until each of the couples are not able to share their wants in satisfactory and secure grounds, the couples' conflicts arises (Green berg and Hanseli, 1999). The basis of emotion-focused Couples Therapy theory is concepts such as adulthood love, attachment types (Bartolimo & Poelman, 1994), and the couples' agitation (Guttman, 1994). It seems that instead of expressing the strong emotions, the couples express those emotions that are less threatening (quoted from Johnson, 2007). Therefore the couples are stuck in a series of constantly repeated lifeless patterns and interactional cycles which are amplified by them; and their inability in enduring the emotions that they are trapped in leads to their maintenance in more agitation and incompatibility in unsolvable matters (Guttman & Lounson, 1986; Gothenburg & Johnson, 1984, Johnson, 2004, Quoting Valdarsky, 2006). Therefore, in the Couples Therapy emotion-focused approach, the focus is not only on the negative interactional patterns, but also on the strong negative emotional responses of agitated couples. In these circumstances, Therapist can reframe the problems and ask the couples to actively participate in the treatment and create new shapes of conversational communication with the aim of making a good and satisfactory relationship (Sharma, 2007). According to what was mentioned, the purpose of the present study is determining the effectiveness of emotion-focused approach on the marital satisfaction in couples. Experimental studies on the process of change in emotion-focused couple therapy has been shown to detect couples asked them to communicate with each other with high levels of emotional needs the shift toward positive interactions (Greenberg, Ford, Alden & Johnson, 1993, Johnson & Greenberg, 1998), intimacy, Powerful emotional self-disclosure (Greenberg & Goldman, 1998) and empathic responses to hearing (Hansel and Aschynldr, 2000) is relevant. What was the purpose of the study? This approach has the effect of emotion on the couple's marital satisfaction.

Method:

Population, Sample, and Sampling Method:

The population of this study included couples Family Counseling Center of Education District 5 Tehran who have been married for at least three years and at most six years. From this population, forty people (20 couples) were chosen by simple randomization and were divided into two groups of experimental and control through random assignment.

Methodology of the Study:

This study is a practical research with the purpose of determining the effectiveness of emotion-focused approach in the marital satisfaction in couples. For this purpose, the couples who had Family Counseling Center of Education District 5 Tehran for solving their marital conflicts were randomly assigned to two groups: treatment, and control (10 couples in each group). All the members of the treatment and the control groups filled out the Onrich marital satisfaction questionnaire before and after the treatment. The experimental group was exposed to Couples Therapy emotion-focused intervention for 8 sessions of 90 minutes, while the control group was put on the waiting list. The two groups were again evaluated after an interval of 8 weeks. All the members in the treatment and the control group filled out the Onrich marital satisfaction questionnaire before and after the treatment. Then, for the analysis of the data t-test and analysis of Covariance were used.

Instrumentation:

Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire:

This questionnaire has been designed by Olson (1989) and is employed in order to evaluate the potential problematic grounds and distinguishing the grounds for strengthening marital relationships. This test includes two versions of 115-question and 125-question that are made of 12 sub-tests. The main version made the participants tired considering the plethora of questions. Soleimanian (1376) prepared a short version of this questionnaire which contains 47 questions. The Alpha Cronbach reliability of the original questionnaire has been reported to be 0/92.

Soleimanian reported the Alpha Cronbach of the short version of the questionnaire 0/90 (Fatehi zade, 1384). In the present study the short version of the questionnaire has been utilized.

Results:

The means and standard deviation of control and experimental groups in marital satisfaction in both pre-test and posttest are shown in table (1). There is no difference between the two groups in the pre-test; however, the experimental group reveals a significant increase in the posttest.

Table (1). Mean and standard deviation of marital satisfaction scores in control and experimental groups' pre-test

Standard Deviation		Mean		Population		Groups
posttest	pretest	posttest	pretest			
6/91	7/15	37/26	30/38	20	Experimental	Marital Satisfaction
8/72	8/28	30/22	30/50	20	Control	

As it is shown in table (1), the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and posttest scores obtained by couples in the experimental group reveals that in all the cases there is a significant increase in the posttest scores.

Hypothesis 1. Do emotion-focused Family Therapy interventions lead to a decrease in marital conflicts?

Table (2). The comparison of variation in marital satisfaction scores of experimental and control group

t	Standard Deviation	Mean	Sample Population	Groups
3/758	5/19	6/43	20	Experimental
	1/48	0/28	20	Control

As shown in table (2), the comparison of marital satisfaction posttest of the experimental and the control group through t-test reveals that there is a significant difference between the two groups; and sum of the variances in the posttest shown that this difference is the result of Family Therapy interventions.

Considering the significant difference between the mean of pre-test and posttest scores in the experimental and the control group, it is revealed that exerting the independent variable in the experimental group has led to the significant difference in their results and this difference is not incidental. This indicates the effectiveness of Family Therapy method in increasing the marital satisfaction and decreasing the marital conflicts, while this is not the case in the control group. According to the statistical resources and the significance of the subtraction of pre-test from posttest scores, the first hypothesis is confirmed. The emotion-focused Family Therapy leads to decrease in interpersonal conflicts.

Hypothesis 2. Do Family Therapy interventions lead to the decrease in interpersonal conflicts in couples?

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation and interpersonal conflict-resolution scores in pre-test and posttest of experimental group

T	Standard Deviation	Mean	Sample Population	Conditions
9/30	3/53	13/26	20	Pretest
	4/09	17/71	20	Posttest

As the results in table (3) shows, the Family Therapy interventions in the experimental group lead to significant changes in their posttest results. Their conflict resolution scores had increased. In other words, the Family Therapy emotion-focused interventions has led to the resolution of the interpersonal conflicts in the couples and as thus the interpersonal conflicts in couples has decreased.

Table (4). Mean and standard deviation of conflict resolution variable in pre-test of the experimental and control group

T	Standard Deviation	Mean	Sample Population	Groups
1/27	3/53	13/26	20	Experimental
	3/48	12/25	20	Control

Table(5). The conflict resolution scores variation in posttest of the experimental and control group

T	Standard Deviation	Mean	Sample Population	Groups
6/175	4/09	17/71	20	Experimental
	3/56	12/31	20	Control

As tables (4) and (5) reveal, the t-test comparison of the conflict posttest scores in the experimental and the control group indicates a significant difference between the experimental and the control group; and considering the convergence of variances in pre-test, the difference is a result of the observations. In other words, the interventions have influenced the experimental group and have decreased the interpersonal conflicts; however, there is not a significant variation is the posttest of the control group that was imposed to the independent variable.

Hypothesis 3. Does the emotion-focused Family Therapy has an effect on women more than men?

Table 6. Mean of variation in marital satisfaction scores of women and men in the experimental group after the intervention

T	Standard Deviation	Mean	Sample population	Gender
8/093	5/13	9/05	10	Female
	3/80	3/81	10	Male

The results indicate that although the emotion-focused Family Therapy interventions in couples have caused a significant difference in their satisfaction, the interventions are more effective in women of experimental group and have caused more significant differences comparing the men. In other words, the Family Therapy interventions have more effectiveness and efficiency in women.

In this method, the attempt has been made to treat the couples with marital problems in the experimental group utilizing the emotion-focused Family Therapy. The results of the effect of independent variable in the experimental group and the control group have been evaluated and the findings of this analysis are as follows:

1. The emotion-focused Family Therapy interventions program in the experimental group, in comparison with the control group, has led to significant increase in the marital satisfaction of couples with marital problems.
2. The executed emotion-focused Family Therapy program has caused a significant increase in the interpersonal conflict resolutions in couples.
3. The Family Therapy program is more effective on women rather than men.

Conclusion and Discussion:

The emotion-focused approach is a structured and short-term approach in Couples Therapy that functions based on clear concepts of marital problems and emotional responses. According to this viewpoint, marital agitation is caused

and maintains by widespread states of negative affection, lack of concern toward needs, negative interaction patterns and unsuitable emotional experience. Emotional –focused treatment (EFT) is a kind of rehabilitating approach in which the attempt is to recognize the emotions and transfer them into comprehensible messages and constructive behavior. The inability to interpret the emotional conditions can cause problems in interpersonal relationships. The emotional skills that are defined as the ability to distinguish and express emotions and to have sympathy with others (Cordova et al.2005), increases the intimacy and sense of security, heightens the ambiguity tolerance in individuals, and is essential for continuation and preservation of a successful marriage (Dan Ham, 2008). On the basis of this study, the results obtained are in line with those found by Maerlyn and kurdua (2007) morning (2002) and Mazaheri (2000) who has pointed to gender differences in emotional control. Also, the results obtained from studies by Gatman, Goukben and Hutson (2002), Hayati et al. (2006), Rasuli (2007), Erfani (2007), and Hasanabadi et al. (1390) confirm the findings of this study. Furthermore, Johnson and Greenberg (2005), and Makinen and Jansson (2006) confirm the effectiveness of emotion-focused approach in marital satisfaction. Kroll and Waltz (2002) studies put emphasis on the effectiveness of this rehabilitating approach and the increase in marital satisfaction only in women. The results of this study, also, revealed that a change in method is more frequent in women than men. It seems that women express emotional and sentimental reactions and keep less negative emotions within.

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