
ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Efficacy of Emotion Focused Couple Therapy on Marital Adjustment

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a part of quasi-experimental practical research and its goal is examining efficacy of emotion focused couple therapy on marital adjustment. Statistical society of this research consists of all couples referred to governmental counseling centers in Varamin province. Research sample includes 30 couples (60 persons) that were chosen by accessible and volunteer sampling and were allocated randomly in two experiment and control groups (15 couple on each group). Experiment group received collectively 8 session of emotion-focused couple therapy (each session was 2 hour). Dyadic adjustment scale was used in two stages of pre and post test to collect information. The results showed that emotion focused couple therapy increases marital adjustment and was more effective in women than men on marital adjustment.

Key words: *Emotion focused couple therapy, marital adjustment*

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INTRODUCTION

Marital adjustment is a situation that wife and husband often feel happy and satisfied and enjoy being together. This adjustment arises by mutual interests, taking care of each other, acceptance, perception and satisfying needs [1]. "Affection elixir" arising from this close relation protects us against physical and mental disease and increases our resistance force [2]. A strong passionate relation cause personal development strengthening and self-actualization and associates with a realistic, positive, and integral self-perception. Marital incompatibility prevalence and its effect on physical and mental health of couple and offspring too urged mental health specialists to consider couple therapy field more seriously. Marital adjustment was concerning psychologist and sociologist from long time ago, and is one of the largest concept in determining happiness and relation stability level[3].

[4]After examining more than 1000 couples found out that among happy couple positive interactions and comments on the average are five times as much as negative interactions and comments. Also they showed satisfied couples have more relation with each other. Marital and common life problems are issues such as wrong choices, lack of mutual understanding and insufficient couple empathy, cold and spiritless lives and depressive lives full of conflict and stress, domestic violence, treachery, increase in marriage age and increasing divorce statistics and etc. According their findings most distinct feature of disturbed and undisturbed marriage is existence of mutual negative emotions (criticizing, belittling, defensiveness, avoiding from interaction). On the basis of one of the four key assumptions of emotion focused couple therapy, couples are stuck in negative patterns that prevent required responses for safe relation. These couples need support for formulating their needs and dependency fears so that can improve safe relation correctly [5].

[6] Believes that some time after the beginning of common life, differences in expectation and needs show themselves. These differences make it hard for them to get consistent with each other. In this phase they feel that their spouse is not so that they thought at first and they begin to accuse each other for being colder. They showed that participant in emotion focused couple therapy reported more marital adjustment after treatment in comparison with control group.

As a result of prominent role of emotions in marital conflicts, one of the attitudes that concentrate on family adjustment as well as emotions is emotion focused attitude. In emotion focused family therapy it is assumed that conflicts arise in marital life when couples are not able to satisfy each other's attachment needs for safety, security and satisfaction. In other word, disturbed marital relations shows couple defeat in establishing relations with safe attachment pattern [5]. Emphasis of emotion focused couple therapy on compatible dependency method is by use of protecting, support and mutual concern for needs of spouse and oneself. It seems that instead of expressing strong emotions, couple expresses emotions that are less threatening [5].

This attitude believes marital disturbance arises with pervasive state of negative feeling and attachment trauma and it continues. In this situation, therapist can remold problems and ask from each couple to have active participation in treatment process and create new forms of conversations in order to develop safe attachment. Researchers introduced 9 cognitive strategies for adjusting emotions. Thought rumination, acceptance, self-blaming, positive regard again, concentration on programming, revising and reassessing positively, monitoring, evaluating as catastrophe. Blaming others[7]. Therefore emotions cognitive adjustment strategies help to adjust negative excitations and emotions. This adjustment method has direct relation with advancement growth or mental disease arising. Emotion focused couple therapy from beginning of 1980's decade emphasized on crucial role and importance of emotions and conversations arose from emotions in organizing interactional patterns.

Marital incompatibility between couples in addition to above mentioned issues, causes disturbance in social relations, tendency to social and moral deviation and cultural values fall among couples[8]. Recent researches which concerned marital satisfaction and disturbance are consistent with researches concerning efficacy of positive and negative relations on couples health and performance and researches concerning effective clinical interventions. All of these researches have close relation with implemented studies on adults love attachments essence. Finally different thinking layers and different studies are oriented a specific direction and depict an integrated picture. Our perception from close relations importance, the way they get disturbed, our ability in recognizing effective interventions and expressing change process and our ability in adults love process description is now reached to main point. We really can discuss about couple therapy as an art and a science that is established based on explanation, prediction and detection [2]. Emotion focused couple therapy is used to decrease personal symptomatology such as depression, anxiety disorder and chronic disease [2].

Concerning experience emotional disorders by couple can cause functional problems in individual as well as interpersonal relations, and with knowing that emotion focused couple therapy was less concerned in Iran, the present study tries to examine efficacy and efficiency level of this approach tactics. Therefore main question of this research is:

Is emotion focused couple therapy is effective on increasing marital adjustment?

Research history

[9] a research was carried out with title of effect of emotion focused intervention on decreasing marital incompatibility having offspring with chronic disease. This research results show emotion focused therapy causes decreasing these couples marital incompatibility.[10] Concerned examination of efficacy level of emotion focused couple therapy and integrated systemic couple therapy on increasing marital adjustment of couple suffering attachment trauma. Result showed there is meaningful difference between each approach in increasing harmed couples' marital incompatibility of experiment group and control group, but there was no meaningful difference between two method efficacy and result remained stable after 3 month.

[11]in a research concerned efficacy of emotion focused couple therapy and couples' positive emotions with outside marriage relation. Independent test results on pre and post test points averages in experiment group and control group shows that there is significant difference between experiment and control group. These findings mean that emotion focused approach was effective in increasing marital adjustment and positive feeling to spouse in people having relation outside marriage. Results of research secondary assumptions indicate emotion focused treatment cause increasing self-esteem in divorced women and increase relief level.

[12] in his researches concluded that emotion focused approach has desirable efficacy in increasing couple adjustment and sexual satisfaction. Other findings in the research argue about efficacy of emotion focus couple therapy intervention in women is more than men. Within a research concerned efficacy of emotion focused couple therapy on couples attachment trauma solving and marital adjustment and results showed that this approach caused decreasing attachment trauma and increasing couple marital adjustment.

[14] in a research concerned efficacy of emotion focused couple therapy in forgiveness facilitation and couples emotional traumas solving, such as anger, resent due to betrayal and insult. In the end of treatment treated couples showed meaningful improvement in marital satisfaction, trust and forgiveness and these results were stable after two months.

[15] In a research on 30 couples who had tendency to divorce concerned couple therapy efficacy. Results showed emotion focused collective couple therapy interventions cause increasing marital adjustment in understanding and decreasing tendency to couple divorce. [16] in a research showed that emotion focused therapy and integrated systemic therapy (IST) are equally effective in adjustment improvement. And concerning result of this research within 4 months after examining, IST group average was more than EFT group. These researchers point out that investigated couples in this research were more disturbed than Johnson and [16] research couples, and it can be a justification for difference between two groups EFT and IST in next examination.

In other research on couples [17] showed emotion focused couple therapy causes marital satisfaction, increasing trust level and forgiveness between couples. [18] showed in a research that emotion focused couple therapy cause increasing positive and flexible relations in experiment group more than control group. As a result emotion focused couple therapy is effective in improving ability of establishing positive and flexible relations and in general in couples useful relations process.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to practical researched and is a quasi-experimental type and its goal is examining efficacy of emotion focused couple therapy on couple adjustment. For implementing this research pre and post test pattern with two experiment and control group was used. In this research statistical society is all couple that at least five years elapsed from their common life and in time range 22/12/2013 to 22/02/2014 have referred to governmental counseling center in Varamin province in order to solve their marital incompatibility problems and conflicts and communicational problems.

Statistical sample in this study was 30 couples (60 person) that were chosen by accessible and volunteer sampling and randomly came across two experiment and control groups (15 couples in each group). Couples selection criteria was passing at least five years from their common life start, no physical distance between them and no decision for divorce, not suffering from mental retardation and psychotic disorders and drug disorders among couple.

Measuring tool

For gathering data in this research Spanir marital adjustment measuring tool was used.

Spanir marital adjustment tool questionnaire (DAS): is a scale with 32 items that is provided by Spanir (1976) in order to examining adjustment quality of marital relation or similar dyadic relations. These tools made for several purposes. Total points can be obtained by this tool for general satisfaction measuring in a sincere relation. Also by this scale result it is possible to distinguish adjusted and not adjusted couples with probability of divorce. Factor analysis shows that this scale measures for dimensions of relation (mutual satisfaction, mutual attachment, mutual agreement and expressing affection). With exerting some modifications it can be used for interview too.

Norms: "marital adjustment scale" is made by a sample group combined married persons (n=218) and divorced persons (n= 94). Married persons age average was 35.1 years old and divorced persons age average was a little less 30.4 years old. Marriage duration of married persons sample group was 13.2 years and marriage duration average for divorced persons and sample group was 8.5 years. Total average point of this scale was 114.8 for married persons and standard deviation was 17.8.

Reliability and validity examination:

Reliability: scale total number with Cronbach' alpha 0.96 has significant internal consistency. Internal consistency of sub-scales is between good and excellent. Mutual satisfaction=0.94, mutual attachment =0.81, mutual agreement=0.90 and expressing affection is 0.73. for increasing test reliability some questions were designed positive and number of questions presented negatively. In research that was carried out in Iran researchers reached a high internal consistency (95%) in all questionnaires.

Validity: at first this scale was checked out by logical methods of content validity. Couple adjustment scale with ability in distinguishing married couples and divorced in each question has shown its validity in known groups. This scale has concurrent validity too that is correlated with "Locke Wallace marital satisfaction scale" [10].

Pointing:

"Marital adjustment scale" gives three different types of ranking. Total sum of all questions is between 0 and 151. Points 101 and less indicated marital incompatibility and problem. Higher points show fewer disturbances and more adjustment.

Data analysis data

First step in examining and analysis of data obtained from implementing a research is arranging obtained data so that a comprehensive and meaningful interpretation can be achieved. Data description takes place by descriptive statistics methods and making tables of frequency distribution and calculating central and scattered indexes percentage.

In this research among selected 30 coupled, after carrying out pre test and replacing in experiment and control groups, one couple after first session (assessment session) and before second session (treatment session) gave up to continue and another couple after starting treatment sessions and before finishing treatment period retired from training and a questionnaire expelled from experiment group because it was not complete. In general 115 questionnaires were examined and analyzed.

Table 1: sample circumstance

Group	Frequency	Percentage
Experiment	30	50
Control	30	50
total	60	100

Table 1 shows 50 percent of participants are in experiment group and 50 percent are in control group.

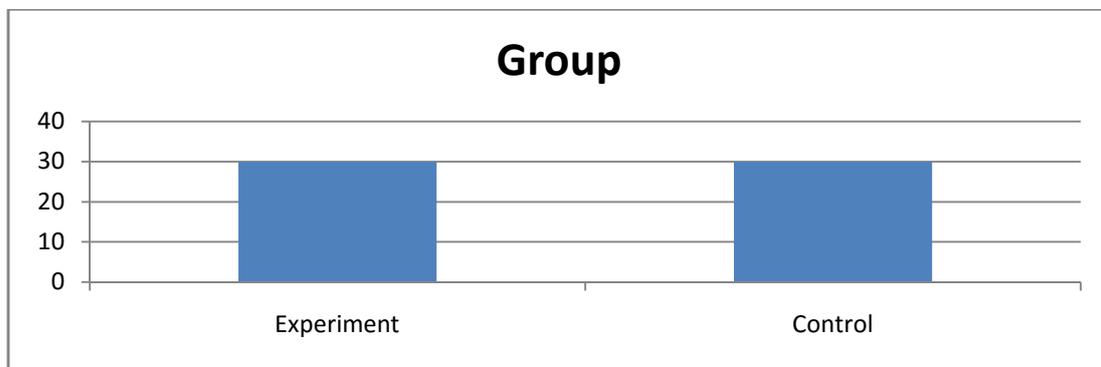


Figure 1: bar chart of participant situation

In figure 1 it can be seen that participant number in experiment group and control group is equal and is 30 couples.

Table 2: pre test descriptive indexes

	variant	Average	Standard deviation	lowest	highest
Experiment group	Marital adjustment	91.2	10.3	35	145
Control group	Marital adjustment	89.3	11.4	33	139

In table 2: it can be seen that marital adjustment pre test average in experiment group is 91.2, lowest point is 35 and highest point is 145. Marital adjustment pre test average in control group is 89.3, and lowest point is 33 and highest point is 139.

Table 3: descriptive indexes post test

	variant	Average	Standard deviation	lowest	highest
Experiment group	Marital adjustment	129.9	9.6	45	150
Control group	Marital adjustment	90.6	10.3	35	140

In table 3: it can be seen that marital adjustment post test average in experiment test is 129.9 , lowest point is 45 and highest point is 150. Marital adjustment post test average in control group is 90.6T lowest point is 35 and highest point is 140.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Marriage is a social phenomenon. Also it's a response to mental needs and tendencies. It is a lasting and stable unit that collective survival and qualitative and quantitative life aspects of consequent generations depend on it. Marriage is natural need and request of man and woman and all proper teachings in human societies especially divine religions in particular Islam religion affirmed it and encouraged their followers to marriage. Certainly choosing spouse is one of the most important decisions in our lifetime and in fact

all emotions and reproduction and training offspring and income and responsibility and providing needs and future challenges of our life depend on it. Although marriage is and will remain stable as a worldwide unit, but marriage rate in recent decades reduced and reversely divorce rate is increasing in western societies such as USA. With these astonishing evidences and results and changes, it doesn't seem discussing about choosing spouse, its criteria and process would be especially important. There is very obvious evidence that couples who bring about conflict, experience intense and pervasive problems when they want establish and maintain sincere and passionate relations. They confess that their feelings are not perceived properly by their spouse and lack of sincerity, trust and satisfaction and unsafe attachment are observed among couples. Couples with unsafe attachment relation interact with each other by defensive emotional patterns that prevent trust, closeness, and appropriate reaction [13].

Marital dissatisfaction is accompanied with gradual decrease of emotional dependency and increase in reluctance feeling toward life. Many couples are dependent to their spouse about emotional support. Thus marital quality issue and compatibility and satisfaction from relation has great importance. By reason of ever-increasing marital incompatibility its effect on physical and mental health of couples and their offspring and ever-increasing tendency to divorce in the world, and in smaller scale in our current society, Researcher intends to help to solve these problems. It must be considered that since this separation consequences and repercussions and bad effects on family members it duplicates the need to concern and solve this problem. Each couple therapy approach considers couples adjustment or problems from certain viewpoint. One of the appropriate treatments that can be used in decreasing marital problems is emotion focused approach in family therapy. Emotion focused therapy (EFT) is a systemic short therapy and its goal is decreasing marital conflicts and bringing about safe attachment bond and increasing marital adjustment. As said before first step in developing emotional focused theory was carried out by [5] and they find out the effective role of emotions in treatment sessions. Researchers tried to depict in theory relation between cognition, emotion and behavior. They argued that there is a complicated relation between cognition and emotion and many clinical problems is a result of problem in emotional processes. Therefore in order to solve clinical problems rearranging emotional experience and emotion focused interventions are required.

[14] Believes that emotions can change whole of the existence. Therefore, concerning emotions in treatment process is important, because emotions can provide information that are important for our mental health. Emotion technique often is unperceivable and impenetrable by intellect and emotions can be used to change emotion. Couples who can't discard their negative emotions can be encouraged to get touched again with their emotions and find a positive perception to them. When people change their perception about a person or an event, they can change their emotional reactions too.

According to [4], in recent decade and among couple therapy attitudes, emotion focused have been had most therapeutic ability. Johnson Contemporary researcher who theorized about psychotherapeutic forces and integrating this forces with couples relational features, finally introduced emotion focused therapy into couple therapy field, a therapy with Bowl by attachment theory origin that combined first and third therapeutic forces with systems attitudes in family.

Using adult attachment theory in this attitude provides integrated framework for understanding adult love essence. This attitude main goal is helping couples to recognize their needs and main tendencies and each other attachment worries, therefore couple attachment unsafely reduces and safe attachment increases between them. This approach emphasizes on role of each spouse emotional experiences and its systematic attitude emphasize on role of interactive cycles in maintaining problem therefore emotion focused therapy integrates inner person world and interpersonal world [13].

This study implemented with goal of examining efficacy of emotion focused couple therapy on increasing marital adjustment. At first in this chapter we explain findings of research assumption and then research limitations and finally research and practical proposes. And now explanation for research assumptions is presented.

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