

Effectiveness of Cognitive and Behavioral Couple Therapy on Communication Skills of Couples Referring to Welfare Consultation Centers in Kermanshah City

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Abstract

The present research was conducted aiming at surveying the effectiveness of cognitive and behavioral couple therapy based on problem solving on the communication skills of couples. Research method was semi-experimental and research plan was of pretest-posttest type with a control group. Research population included the couples referring to the welfare consultation centers in Kermanshah. In order to select sample volume, 16 couples were selected through voluntary sampling and were then replaced after being peered in two groups, namely test group and control group (8 couples each). Members of test group participated in 6 sessions (2 hours each) of group training of cognitive and behavioral couple therapy while control group did not receive any intervention. Measurement means included Locke and Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale. The results showed that communication skills increased among the couples upon training the cognitive and behavioral couple therapy and that its effectiveness was equal among the women and men. Based on the results of this research, it is suggested that more consideration is given to the holding of training sessions and courses of cognitive and behavioral therapy and behavioral models for the couples so that in this way, more firm and integrated family relations are established.

Key words: Cognitive and Behavioral Couple Therapy, Communication Skills

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, family is the most important organization which leads to the physical, psychological and social development and welfare of the child and is the factor of his/her access to physical, psychological and social balance (Wood, 1996). Marriage event is entering to a new stage of life which includes a very significant part of the individual and social life of the people. The beginning and forming the relationships are influential on their future behaviors and attitudes and can negatively or positively influence the couples and children. The quality of family performance is one of the very influential factors on the family members', couples' and also the whole society's health. In the meantime, the relationships between the spouses play a major role in providing the social – psychological health of their own and their children (Zahra Kaar, 2010). In determination of the factors influencing marital satisfaction and compatibility, the scholars agree that the successful marriage requires special ability and skills in the parties which the communicative and problem solving skills are one of them. One way to look at the family structure is to pay attention to the communicative channel through which the family members especially the spouses interact. The communicative channels that frequently happen in a family are called communicative patterns and the whole of these patterns form the communicative network of the family (Goldenberg, 1995, translated by HosseinShahi et al., 2007). The communicative patterns are styles or behaviors which exchange the information in a family (i.e. encrypted data) (Jarareh, 2008). When the family is healthy, the members receive each other's' messages which usually contain clear and subtle points. In inefficient families, usually silence rules among the family members, the messages are sent but they are hardly ever received with enthusiasm (Break & Bernard, quoting from Glonic, 2001, translated by Bahari et al., 2007). The main aim of marriage is communication, the communication provides this possibility for the spouses to discuss and change ideas and become aware from each other's' needs; in fact, the couples' relationships is created with the purpose of satisfying all levels of needs and this is because the unsuccessfulness in making relationships is the most common problem arises by unsatisfied couples (Yong & Long, 1996, quoting from AdibRaad & Mahdavi, 2005). The ineffective relationship leads to a deep inter-individual distance which is experienced in all of life's aspects and all parts of the society. Not using the necessary skills for starting and continuing a joyful marital life may lead to loneliness, physical diseases and psychological pressures, sense of incompetence and occupational dissatisfaction, family problems and even death (Zamani Monfared, 1997). Different studies have indicated that one of the most important problematic factors is disruption in communication or in other words disruption in the understanding and realization process. For example, in a report presented by a family counseling agency in 1970, 87 percent of the participant couples in the research indicated that their main problem is communicative problem (Jacobson, Waldron & Moore, 1980, quoting from Heydari et al., 2005). The primary duty of family is to make communications and the family performance leads to meeting the individual and social needs. For this reason it causes the development and perfection of the family, self-confidence and becoming sociable of the family members. Clear and effective relationship among the family members leads to developing values and emotions. Effective relationship

is the infrastructure of a successful and healthy family; in other words, when the family members use effective communicative patterns, they have a clear perception and transaction of the contents and intention of any message, satisfy the psychological needs of the family members and continue the communication and participation in the society. The type of family system and its communicative relationships significantly influences the family members because personality, learning, self-confidence and choosing and logical decision making power of the family members all depend upon the information type and the way of transferring it among the family members (Oliver & Miler, 1994). Family therapy and couple therapy are special forms of group therapy which have been common in 1950es. Family therapists and couple therapists work in order to improve the family interactions instead of emphasizing on the psychological problems of each of the family members; and this is the way that they help the individual to have a better performance (Kaplan et al., 1994). In fact, couple therapy is a kind of psychology services for the couples who cannot continue their common life and constructive relationships and are not satisfied with their marital life due to the inter-individual problems and obstacles and lack of awareness of appropriate methods of problem solving and using appropriate behavioral methods (Bernstein, 2002, translated by Sohrabi, 2003). Several approaches have been presented in order to treat families' and couples' problems which one of them is group cognitive behavioral couple therapy (GCBTC) (Patterson, 2005, quoting from Navarani Pour, 2008). This approach believes that the individual's performance is the result of mutual and continuous interaction between the behavior and social conditions and in this regard, cognitive performance (the ability of thinking and selecting) is also effective. In cognitive behavior therapy, it is tried to treat the thoughts and actions of the patient through influencing the intelligent thought pattern (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004). From the viewpoint of Ellis the inefficiency occurs when the parties have unreal beliefs about their relationships and present very negative evaluations from the source of their dissatisfaction (Ellis & Harper, 2003, translated by Shafiei, 2006). Using the principals of cognitive behavioral couple therapy the spouses may stand against the irrational judgments and eliminate the distorted images. Also the spouses can tear the misunderstanding circle which leads frustration and disenchantment in the marital life through more accurate and logical concluding (Kent & Ning, 2008, translated by Firouzbakht, 2009). Generally, it can be concluded that the cognitive principals of cognitive-behavioral couple therapy emphasizes the mutual realization of spouses from each other and considers cognition as the inseparable part of the change process of the couples (Datilio, 2005). Based on the above, in this study, the research question is whether the group cognitive behavioral couple therapy along with training the problem solving skills increases the communicative skills among the referring couples to the welfare counseling centers of Kermanshah city?

Methodology

The current research is a functional research from the kind of half-experimental plans with the title of pretest-posttest plan with the control group. The independent variables are the cognitive behavioral couple therapy (CBTC) and gender and the dependent variable is the amount of communicative skills of the spouses. The statistical society included all the couples referred to the welfare counseling centers. The research's sample included 16 couples from the mentioned society and the available sampling method was used in order to select them; in the way that firstly the referring couples to the welfare counseling did the pretest; after that, 16 couples were randomly selected and divided into two groups of experimental and control. After 6 sessions of training on the experimental group, the posttest was done on both of the groups.

Research Tools

The used tool in this study is questionnaire which is explained in the following:

The Questionnaire of Inter-Individual Communicative Skills

This questionnaire has 19 questions and its purpose is to measure the amount of inter-individual communicative skill in different people. Its answering range is in the Likert scale. In BA thesis of MonajemiZadeh (2012), the simultaneous validity of the questionnaire was calculated and a strong correlation was discovered between it and the questionnaire of effective communication ($r = 0.698$) and as a consequence its simultaneous validity was confirmed. Also, the questionnaire's reliability or its ability to attract trust was measured by Cronbach's Alpha measuring method. The Cronbach's alpha was obtained equal to 0.73 for the questionnaire of communicative skills and this indicates good reliability of this questionnaire.

Applying research Methodology

This is a functional study from the half-experimental number type and the contents of threat sessions are as following.

Contents Sessions

- 1- In the first session, the researcher dealt with the purposes of group therapy and training and the structure of group sessions. In the end, the principals of group session were investigated.
- 2- After reviewing the previous session contents, the ABC model was taught along with examples from the group members and after identifying absolute destructive beliefs and values and investigating the reasons of their problematic status, the couples were given homework about ABC model and identifying absolute beliefs and values.
- 3- In the third session we dealt with the effect of illogical thoughts on the emotional disturbance and getting familiar with automatic thoughts, cognitive error, training and the way of using the form of registering inefficient thoughts and then the couples were given an appropriate homework.
- 4- The relationship of emotion, belief and behavior (thought inspiration) and the behavioral consequences were paid attention to and it was tried that the couple become aware of the influence of attitudes, principals and norms in the inter-individual

relationships; moreover some techniques were presented for identifying the inefficient attitudes, and finally, the homework of using the table of registering the inefficient thoughts and identifying the inefficient thoughts and attitudes was determined.

5- In the seventh session, we investigated getting familiar with the spouse' world technique and getting aware from the passion map[and training communicative skills (active listening, empathy, caress, assertiveness) and appropriate homework was presented.

6- Technique of adding the kindness, admiring and getting closer to each other was trained and after that, the sustainable change and reinforcing positive behaviors and thoughts were introduced.

Data Analysis Method

In this study, SPSS software was used in order to analyze the data. Firstly, the data was examined in terms of normality and similar variances through Kolmogorov and Levin tests. Then, the descriptive statistics were used in order to determine mean, variance and standard deviation of the data. Also in inferential statistics the covariance analysis was used for independent groups in order to analyze the obtained data.

Research Findings

The descriptive statistics of the current research (mean and standard deviation) are given in table 1.

Table 1: descriptive indices of marital compatibility scores and communicative skills in experimental and control groups

Standard deviation	Mean	Stage	Group	Variable
3/15	47/40	Pretest	Experimental group	Communicative skills
9/34	63/40	Posttest		
3/30	47/68	Pretest	Control group	
11/68	48	Posttest		

Regarded to the data of table 1, it is observed that the mean of scores of test of communicative skills in the experimental group has increased from 47.40 (pretest) to 63.40 (posttest) while the control group has not significantly changed.

Table 2: covariance analysis of scores of communicative skills of the couples of the two groups

Meaningfulness Level	F value	Total Mean	Freedom Degree	Total Squares	Changes' resource
0/01	7/23	429/6	1	429/6	Pretest
0/003	10/76	639/8	1	639/8	Method's influence
		59/42	29	1723	Error
			32	131357	Total

In order to examine the research hypothesis under the title of "cognitive behavioral couple therapy increases the communicative skills of the couples." We used analysis of variance test (ANOVA). Due to the table 2, the obtained data from the communicative scores indicates that there is a meaningful difference between the two groups' scores in posttest in level 5 ($P < 0.05$) and $F = 10.76$); therefore it can be said that the cognitive behavioral couple therapy influences the increase of communication skills of the couples.

Conclusion

The current study was done with the purpose of determining the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral couple therapy along with training the problem solving skill on the amount of communicative skills of couples. Its hypothesis which was that the cognitive behavioral couple therapy influences the communicative skills of the couples was confirmed and these findings are compatible and aligned with the results of researches of Fallow Field, Lipkin, & Hall (2004), Howard (2001), Brant (1997), Edward et al. (2003), Aarefi et al. (2012), Alborz (2007), Etemadi et al. (2005). In explaining this hypothesis about the entity of cognitive behavioral couple therapy and the amount of its effectiveness on improving the communicative skills, the findings indicate that when the irrational cognitions and beliefs and as a consequence the illogical behaviors are challenged and substituted by the logical thinking and practice and skill acquisition, the positive beliefs and behaviors, the marital satisfaction and compatibility and communicative skills significantly improve; because communication is the main core of each relationship, when an openly, clear and emotional communication occurs, the relationship can be strengthened, but when it occurs defensively, aggressively and ineffectively, the relationship is weakened (Bolton, translated by Sohrabi, 2005). Barker explains that despite the hidden communications, clear communications are usually desired and favorable; while the hidden communications which are ambiguous, deceptive or confusing

increase the possibility of confusion and distortion of the recipient and can lead to anxiety (Barker, translated by Dehqani, 1996). Costen's studies (2004) indicate that the positive verbal communication simultaneously and positively correlated to the marital compatibility and the negative communication is the sign and beginning of the couple's turmoil (Costen, 2004). Also, Guttman (1990) believes that failure in communicating is the most common complaint of the divorced couples and indicates that the positive verbal communication simultaneously and positively relates to the marital satisfaction. In addition to the above, the findings of the current study indicate that the couples may help the relationship improve through using techniques for increasing positive activities and optimizing the relationship. They may minimize stress and psychological mental pressures through applying the mentioned cases. These results are compatible with the results of Costen's research (2004). Finally, it can be concluded that the problem solving based cognitive behavioral couple therapy increases the communicative skills of the couples.

Research Limitations

From the limitations of this study we can express the research tools and sampling in Kermanshah city. Therefore, it seems that it is necessary to generalize the results cautiously. The next limitation is the lack of enough control on the environmental and family variables and the issues related to the timely presence of the individuals and doing the duties.

Suggestions

It is suggested to examine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral couple therapy on the other variables and different samples of different groups of the society, too. Also, it is suggested that more culture building plans to be implemented through public media and educational brochures in order for the couples to find out the importance of training in the marital issues field and the way of solving problems and learning necessary techniques for improving the communicative skills and spend more time and energy in this matter and as a consequence educate a better generation and create friendlier and warmer families.

Acknowledgement

This article is extracted from a research project by the University of Kermanshah and all financial costs paid by the research Department of Islamic Azad University of Kermanshah.

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