

The Effectiveness of Skills Training of Improving Marital Relationships on Increasing Intimacy and Personal Well-Being of Women

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of skills training of improving marital relationships on increasing intimacy and personal well-being of women in Tehran city. The plan was a Quasi- experimental study by using pre-test – post-test with control group. The study society were all married women in Tehran during the year 1392 with visit to the family counseling center of the education, was demanding to receive counseling services. Sample (30 member) of the eligible participants were selected randomly and by using random assignment were placed in the both test and control groups. Training sessions were held during the three sessions of 1 hour and at the end, both groups were tested again. Research tools included: 1- Marital intimacy questionnaire with 78 questions in which stability coefficient is estimated 0.92 by using Cronbach's alpha. Personal well-being questionnaire with 9 questions in which stability coefficient is reported 0.70 to 0.85 by using Cronbach's alpha. To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of variance test (ANOVA) and One-Way ANOVA) was used. Research findings indicated that the skills training of improving marital training has increased the intimacy and personal well- being score of women in the post- test and follow-up test significantly ($p < 0.001$). According to research data, it is concluded that the skills training of improving marital relationships can be used to increasing the intimacy and personal well- being of women.

KEYWORDS: skills of improving marital relationship, intimacy, well- being, women.

INTRODUCTION

Quality of relationships between couple is the strongest predictor of the strength of the family and effective communication helps to maintain the relationships between couple (Halford, J. A. N. and Matthew, 2007). One of the best ways to improve the marital relationship is providing the field of communication skills training for couples. Most couples don't know the correct way to talk and verbal communicating with each other and don't have necessary skills in this area. Couples who maintain effective communication have the abilities of acknowledge each other, listening, assertiveness and non- defensive response to the needs of their spouse. Clarity of expression and transparency in communication, self- disclosure and active listening are important and influential relationship skills that leads to intimacy. The analysis of findings indicates the positive influence of relation training in improvement of marital relationship and increase of couple agreed (Victoria², 2008). One of the couple's emotional needs is the relationships coupled with intimacy that is an important source of joy, a sense of meaning and marital satisfaction in life (Pielage, Luteinjin and Arrindell, 2005). Bagarozzi knows the intimacy as a closeness, similarity and an emotional or romance personal relationship with the other people which requires a deep understanding and knowing of the other person to express thoughts and feelings that can be used as a source of similarity and closeness. According to mentioned definition, the components of intimacy can be divided into nine areas: emotional intimacy, Psychological intimacy, Intellectual intimacy, Sexual intimacy, Physical intimacy, Aesthetic intimacy, Social intimacy, Recreational intimacy, temporal intimacy. In the view of theorists of family, intimate relationships between couples, create a family identity, supplying mental health of family member and a strong and protective factor against social and personal problems (Barenz, 1998).

Despite the existing progress in health and well- being, the same definition of personal well- being isn't provided yet, while some person knows the personal well- being as a happiness and emotional balance, others account this structure consists of particular dimensions and components such as meaningful of life, mental strength

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and happiness and some others introduce the personal well-being as a general satisfaction of life, sense of cohesion in life and emotional balance in life (Karademas, 2006).

Well-being is more likely in families who use numerous strategies to solve problem and cope with it. Also there is a positive relation between solving the problem and well-being. Diener, Lucas and Oishi (2002) mentioned to activity theory in the definition of well-being and they knew it as a function of personality and general attitudes toward the environment and circumstances. The word of personal well-being (PWB) refers to the people assessment of their lives and these assessments include both the cognitive judgment (life satisfaction) and emotional assessments (positive emotions and feelings) (Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003).

The studies showed seven important area of well-being: standard of life, health, success in life, security, relationships, relationship with security and safety of future. These dimensions are valuable in perception of people's emotional and physical status and recognition of effective components in personal well-being. Generally, mental well-being is measured by some questions about personal emotions about self and PWB is one of the most famous questionnaires in this context (Agha Yousefi, Alipour and Sharif, 2011).

At the present, influence and efficiency of the numerous positive activities on improving well-being and health are experimentally examined. Moreover, studies have shown that well-being can be increased through change in lifestyle and engaging in positive activity like doing compassionately works, appreciation or optimism (Lyubomirsky and Layous, 2013). In some researches, people were asked to write letters to express appreciation (Boehm, Lyubomirsky, & Sheldon, 2011), do compassionately works (Della Porta, Jacobs Bao, & Lyubomirsky, 2012), visualize ideal selves for the future (Layous, Nelson, & Lyubomirsky, 2012). All of these short and brief actions are self-leader and parsimonious and lead to increase in well-being.

Halford *et al.* (2007) study the spouse relationship. The result indicated that effective relationship helps to maintain and improve the spouse relationship.

Imhond (2007) come to conclusion in his research that lovemaking and affection that has mostly psychological aspect, causes improvement in relationship because it can convert the parties concerns into a secure environment (quoted from Zehtab Najafi, 1388).

Jarvis and *et al.* (2005) have believed that training of relationship skill learns people that how to be relationship primers and continue that and listen to speaks of relationship's side actively, express her thought and feelings easily, understand the feelings of counterpart and attempts to problem solving constructively (quoted from Bahari, Fatehizadeh, Ahmadi, Molavi and Bahrami, 1390).

Laurenceau and Feldman (1998) have shown that feeling of understanding and being understood between spouses helps to predict intimacy. Moreover, Unreserved and empathic responding are constitutive components of intimacy (quoted from Mitchell *et al.*, 2008).

Kirby, Baucom and Peterman (2005) understand that Spouse criticism and blaming reduce intimacy and satisfaction. Whenever spouses use effective relationship skills, they experience lower conflict and will have more intimate relationship (Ronan, Dreer and Dollard, 2004).

According to Kline and Stanford (2004) belief, a daily positive behavior is an appropriate chance for spouses to show most of their intimacy. Marchand and Hock (2000) have shown that the spouses under relationship enrichment training reported higher level of positive relationships and intimacy and most of marital problems caused by misunderstanding and ineffective relationship.

Existing of intimacy between spouses is one of the defending factors for optimal performance of family and the root of many marital conflict and differences can be searched in a lack of communication skills and misconceptions of messages and lack of discussion skills, learning and wrong formation of personality in childhood, difference in the level of culture, values, feeling, thought, knowledge, judgment, person belief and generally, in internal habits and human environment. For this reason, medical interventions and educational strategies should focus on the development of abilities and creation of satisfaction of life in people. According to importance and necessity of these kind of treatments which should have attention to different aspect of person life at their interventions and should emphasize on promotion of well-being and increasing the marital intimacy, the present study have done to study the effectiveness of skills training to improve marital relationships on increasing of intimacy and individual well-being.

Research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Skills' training of improving marital relationships is effective on increasing intimacy and individual well-being of women in Tehran city.

Hypothesis 1-1- Skills' training of improving marital relationships is effective on increasing intimacy and persistence

Hypothesis 1-2- Skills' training of improving marital relationships is effective on individual well-being and persistence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method was semi experimental kind of pre- test, post- test with control group. Statistical society of the research was included all married women in Tehran that during the year 1392 with visit to the family counseling center of the education, was demanding to receive counseling services. To select the sample, the registration was done through the recall in the field of course holding. The entrance and exit factors to study were included: having aged 20 to 45 years, having at least a diploma, not having severe mental disorders, personality disorder and/ chronic physical illness, not participating simultaneously in other treatment programs, and not receiving individual counseling or drug therapy. Among the volunteers, 30 members were selected by using simple random sampling method and were placed in the test and control groups randomly. The test group members were in the age range of 26 to 43 years with the average of 34/23 and were having the education levels of diploma and bachelor. The control group members were in the age range of 23 to 45 years with the average of 32/2 and were having the education levels of diploma, bachelor and master. For both group, pre- test have done before training sessions and post- test have done after the end of sessions. Also, follow- up test was conducted one month after the end of training. In order to observe ethical considerations, participants were coded and the confidentiality of information and privacy principles was observed. The program of skills to improve marital relationships was taught to test group in 3 session of 1 hour for 1 session per week and the control group didn't receive any training. Training program of this research comes from the books of the Causes of men fleeing of marital life, the role of women in commitment of men, Freedom from marital infidelity and Wounded link. Assignments were given during per sessions that they should exercise it until next week.

The summery of sessions was as follows:

sessions	The summarized explanation of sessions
first	Implementation of pre- test, explaining how to do work and providing general plan of training, familiarity of members with each other, reviewing of training objectives, proposing group rules and the number of sessions.
second	How should talk about the difference? Sex differences in the expression and listen to the subject of difference, constructive communication techniques (exchange technology, disarmament technology), general tips during conversation and conflict.
third	Training to improve the common life based on supporting law (avoiding the angry behavior, disrespectful judgment and selfish demands, applying guidelines to achieve a common agreement, training of the talking method through a common agreement)
forth	Training of improving common life based on the attention law, cognition and classification of 8 important needs of self and spouse, learning the method of dispelling each other's emotional needs.
fifth	What is the men's perception of an emotional relationship? A few simple tips for understanding husbands, ten informative tips for improving marital relationships, the characteristic of successful couples
sixth	The importance of sexual relations in the marital life, change of vision, the diagnosis of inner voices (childhood message, society message, home message)
seventh	Training to improve common life based on the time law (devoting enough time to full attention to spouse without the presence of children, friends and relatives, doing the activities that dispel the most important needs of both parties and avoiding to live with past mistakes and focusing on the present and future time), the importance of self- care
eighth	Training to improve common life based on the honesty law (detection of positive or negative feeling, informing the spouse from daily events and activities, honesty about the future).
ninth	Summing up, answering the questions, executing the post- test

The used tools in this research:

1- Individual well- being questioner

The index of individual well- being was constructed by Cummins and Lau in 2002. Each of the items examine the value of person satisfaction of one of the major aspects of life such as life standard, personal health, life achievements, personal relationships, personal security, link with society and future security. The participants should determine the value of their satisfaction or non- satisfaction of aspect in a 22- degree Likert scale (0 = completely dissatisfied to 23 = completely satisfied). Cummins and Lau in 2006 have been revised the scale of personal well- being index and added a new aspect to it. This aspect is related to the spirituality and religion. One of these methods used to score the test: a) the score of each dimension are analyzed separately. b) The scores of 8 dimensions of tests are accumulated to obtain the average score of mental well- being. The results of numerous researches in Australia and other countries suggest desired stability of the test. Cronbach's alpha coefficient has been reported between 0.70 to 0.85. The stability obtained from retest method has been also reported 0.84 in the space between one to two weeks. The significant correlation (0.78) between personal well- being index and the scale of satisfaction of life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin, 1985) represent convergent validation of individual well- being index (Lau, 2006).

2- Couple intimacy questionnaire

This questionnaire includes 87 questions and 9 subscales that are: emotional intimacy (questions 1 to 11); intellectual intimacy (questions 12 to 19); physical intimacy (questions 20 to 25); recreational- social intimacy (questions 26 to 33); relation intimacy (questions 34 to 44); spiritual intimacy (questions 45 to 53); psychological intimacy (questions 54 to 64); sexual intimacy (questions 65 to 72) and general intimacy (questions 73 to 87). Questions of this questioner is the four choices spectrum (always, sometimes, rarely and never) that have been answered from always (score 4) to never (score 1), of course some choices score inverse. The person score obtain through accumulation of choices scores and the maximum score is 348 and the minimum score is 87 that higher score express more intimacy. The Vaker and Thampson intimacy scale was used (1983) to assess concurrent validity of marital intimacy questionnaire and correlations obtained 0.92. The Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the stability of test that it reported 0.92 (quoted from Olia, Fatehizadeh and Bahrami, 1385).

The research findings:

Table (1) the average of the total scores of intimacy and individual well- being of test and control groups

Variable	Test			control		
	Pre- test	Post- test	Follow- up	Pre- test	Post- test	Follow- up
Intimacy	229.2	266.73	273.33	229.8	223	198.86
Individual well- being	51.86	77.33	75.21	53.66	58.86	52.26

As it observe in table 1, the average of total scores of test group in dependent variables (intimacy and individual well- being) shows changes in the steps of post- test and follow- up shows changes with the pre- test step.

Table (2) the results of the Levine test to assess the homogeneity of internal variance of data groups

Variable	Levin test			
	F	df ₁	df ₂	sig
Intimacy	0.613	1	28	0.440
Psychological well- being	0.001	1	28	0.979

The assumption is the use of ANOVA (analysis of variance test), variance homogeneity of pre- test scores of the two groups and so the Levine test was used to assess the homogeneity of variance within groups and considering that the value of F in the $\alpha = 0.05$ level wasn’t significant, so the assumption of homogeneity of data variance used to derive and the use of the variance analysis test to examine the assumptions were assessed.

For analysis of research data, the multi variable variance analysis and one- way variance analysis was used that the results are presented in tables 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Table (3) the summary of the result of one- way multi variable variance analysis about the comparison of the difference average of pre- test – post- test scores for the variables of couple intimacy and women individual well- being

Index		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average of squares	F	Level of significance
Sources of changes						
The effect of group	Pilace effect test	0.776	46.643 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000
	Lambdai Vilkerz test	0.224	46.643 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000
	Hetling effect test	3.455	46.643 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000
	Roi greater root test	3.455	46.643 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000

The results of multi variable variance analysis are presented in above table. From these results, it can be inferred that the test intervention at least on one of the dependent variables (intimacy and individual well- being) has been effective. To clarify this issue that how intervention trial had been affected each of the dependent variables, the one- way variance analysis has been used in the Manoa text.

Table (4) the result of the one- way variance analysis in the Manoa text to comparison of the difference average of pre- test – post- test scores for the variables of couple intimacy and individual well- being in both control and experimental groups

Index		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average of squares	F	Level of significance	amount of effect	Test power
Sources of changes								
The effect of group	Couple intimacy	10046.700	1	10046.700	47.474	0.001	0.629	1.000
	Individual well- being	5413.633	1	5413.633	104.877	0.001	0.789	1.000

According to the result of variance analysis of table (4), there is a significant difference in the area of couple intimacy ($P < 0.001$) between these two groups ($F = 47.474$) and training of skills to improve marital relationship was effective on increasing the intimacy of the women in Tehran city. Statistical power 1/00 is implying a sufficient samples size for analysis. Eta square shows that only 0.629 of these changes had been caused by the effect of skills training to improve marital relationships. Also, according to these results, there is a significant difference in the area of well- being ($P < 0.001$) between these two groups ($F = 104.877$) and the skills training to improve marital relationship on increasing the individual well- being of women in Tehran is effective. The statistical power 1.00 is implying a sufficient samples size for analysis. Eta square shows that only 0.79 of these changes had been caused by the effect of skills training to improve marital relationships.

Furthermore to examine the persistence of the intervention effect of test, the one- way multi variables variance analysis had been done on difference between the follow- up pre- test scores.

Table (5) the summary of the result of one- way multi variable variance analysis about the comparison of the difference average of pre- test – follow- up scores for the variables of couple intimacy and individual well- being

Index		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average of squares	F	Level of significance
Sources of changes						
The effect of group	Pilae effect test	0.799	53.583 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000
	Lambdai Vilkerz test	0.201	53.583 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000
	Hetling effect test	3.969	53.583 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000
	Roi greater root test	3.969	53.583 ^a	2.000	27.000	0.000

The results (table 5) showed that intervention trial was effective at least on one of the dependent variables (couple intimacy and individual well- being) in long time.

The one-way multi variables variance analysis in the Manoa text was used to investigate the differences of groups in dependent variables that the results are presented in table 6.

Table (6) the result of the one- way variance analysis in the Manoa text to comparison of the difference average of pre- test – follow- up scores for the variables of couple intimacy and individual well- being in both control and experimental groups

Index		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average of squares	F	Level of significance	amount of effect	Test power
Sources of changes								
The effect of group	Couple intimacy	5386.800	1	5386.800	5.820	0.023	0.172	0.644
	Individual well- being	3080.533	1	3080.533	58.751	0.000	0.677	1.000

As it can be seen in Table 2, the values of F for the couple intimacy were 5/820 and for the individual well- being were 58.71 that is statistically significant. So the assumption of the effect of treatment was approved. In other words, the results indicate the efficiency and effectiveness of skills training to improve marital relationship during the time on significant increase of the scores of couple intimacy and individual well- being of women in Tehran.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was the investigation of the effect of skills training to improve marital relationship on increasing of intimacy and well- being of women in Tehran. The obtained results that indicate the average difference of pre- test – post- test of intimacy and individual well- being in test and control groups differ significantly. The result indicates the effect of skills training to improve marital relationship on increasing of intimacy of women in Tehran. Also, experimental interventions maintained the effects of themselves in the follow-up step (hypothesis 1-1).

These findings are consistent with the results of Marchand and Hock (2000), Ronan, Deer and Dollard (2004), Victoria (2008) and Lawrencina and Feldman (1998, Quoted from Mitchell et al, 2008). If couples can learned the necessary relationship skills, it prevent from marital conflicts, maintain the family center, improve the quality of family life, settlement of interpersonal conflicts become possible and also the children grow in a healthy mental space. Since the marital relationship is a bilateral relationship that each of couple has an important role in the quality of relationships so it is necessary that the couple come to the treatment process jointly but due to the environmental conditions that men in Iran society avoid to accept the problem and possible changes to the reform, the therapists had to start the work with one of the couples inevitably to see the result of it in the common life. In fact, the thing that causes more intimacy feeling is the special skills that participants have learned. The major and central core of more intimacy are empathy, suitable feedback, expression of feelings, acceptance and understanding that all of these is considered in skills training to improve marital relationships. The findings are coordinated with the study of Halford et al. (2007) that considers the relationship skills training as an effective method to give intimacy to marital relationships. In this regard, the study of Hahlweg and Richter (2010) indicated that the relationship skill training to couples is effective in reducing separation and divorce and increasing intimacy. Haji Abolzadeh(2002, quoted from Salamat, Zamani and Allahiari, 2007) had been shown that communication skills training results in consistency, unity and marital agreement and increases expression of love and intimacy between couples. The findings of Doss and Christensen (2007) also show that the communication skills training causes peaceful discussion and compared to most of the used treatment and training programs, it is more effective in primary and secondary prevention and couples disintegration and distressed and increased intimacy. It seems that expressiveness skills enable the participants to better understanding of stress sources, needs and desires and so they can better solve the problem. Also, it enables them to take action the more compassionate understanding of physical and psychological needs of the counterpart more quickly. Fatehizadeh and et al. (2006) investigated the effect of enrichment training of marital life on increasing marital intimacy in a research.

In the training sessions, participants learned that people who behave honestly in the relationships, their interest to their couples is more clear, coherent and continuous and they have positive feeling about themselves and counterpart. The skills training of relationship improvement in this program led to this, that women can express their feelings easily and discuss their needs without fear and misunderstanding and thus achieve the intimacy in their relationships, which can improve all aspect of their lives because the depth of intimacy that two people create in their relationship depends on their ability to clear, correct and effective transfer of their thoughts, feelings, needs and aspirations. They learned that they could manage the existing conflicts in their relationship by using positive methods and less use of negative interactions and create an environment in which more opportunities arise for self-disclosure and agreement about family problems.

The results of this research indicate the positive effect of skills training to improve marital relationships on individual well- being of women (hypothesis 1-2). In other words, a significant difference was observed in individual well- being scores between test and control groups. The study of follow- up also showed significant difference, it means that the effect of trainings has been stable. According to Karen's belief (2002), the non-effective relationship causes misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, lonely feeling in family members and society, impairs one's confidence through time, helpless feeling and thus provide social and psychological damages and reduce the one's ability to deal with life problems and thus leads to come down in the level of well- being. Personal well- being include satisfaction and important structure that in low level leads to depression and social isolation and causing a lack of satisfaction feeling, confidence, and feeling of will or purpose in life and reduce in physical and mental health. Many overseas researches have emphasized on the impact of positive relationships with others in reducing of depression and anxiety and increase in mental health and well- being (Segrin and Rynes, 2009). The studies indicate that well- being can be increased through change in lifestyle and doing positive activities like doing loving deeds, gratitude or optimism (Lyubomirsky and Layous, 2013). In the theory and research stated that people can increase their well- being through simple and intentional positive activities such as expressing gratitude (Boehm, Lyubomirsky and Sheldon, 2011) or kindness (Della Porta, Jacobs Bao and Lyubomirsky, 2012) and the feeling of joy and happiness. In addition to the effect that communication patterns have on members of a family, it can have an

effect on other social relationships and situations in the outside of home (such as work, education ... environment). In the research of Cohen et al. (2003), social persons and those who have close and friendly relations with others reported higher individual well-being. According to Cummins and et al. belief (2001, quoted from Agha yousefi and et al, 2011), the human body has an internal system that monitor the retention of individual well-being. In their opinion, in the stressful conditions, a wide range of cognitive and communicative strategies are able to restore the proper level of well-being (including extroversion, optimism, confidence and perceived control). Gordon, Arnette and Smith (2011) also concluded that relationship skills training are effective in communication satisfaction and people's physical and mental health. The skills training of relationship improvement learns the person to discuss about their feelings and express their needs without fear and misunderstanding that this can improve all aspects of his life and causes satisfaction increase and well-being and increase the person optimism about his future life. Rafee (2009) has done a research as the effectiveness of relationship skills training and gradual détente on quality of life and psychological well-being of infertile women. The result indicated the effectiveness of this training on quality of life and psychological well-being of infertile women. Given that individual well-being is defined as a persons understanding of their life in the area of emotional behavior, mental functions and dimensions of mental health and return to their judgments about the degree of their satisfaction of life, perfection, adequacy and satisfaction of specific areas of life such as marriage and employment, it seems that learning of communication skills can provide the base of happiness and general satisfaction of life by changing the persons performance.

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