The effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral couple therapy in increasing the marital compatibility of the divorce applicant couples

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Abstract

In our country the family and marriage is of great importance due to the specific cultural and worthwhile issues. Thus, the efforts for stability and continuity of the family and satisfying the emotional and psychological needs of the members within the family are of the utmost importance. Divorce and family breakdown in addition to disturb the mental-emotional balance of the people lead to the social harm such as children escape from the family, theft, murder and crime. Today, it seems that family; the basic foundation of society has been exposed to collapse. The past two decades studies considered the negative marital interactions as the most powerful factor in the marital dissatisfaction. It should be noted that marriage is not a static and stagnant state between two unchangeable people. There are disputes with the various degrees in some marriages. Although no couples get married with the aim of separation and almost all couples get married in the hope of a long-term life with peace and happiness, many marriages reached an impasse and leads to the separation over the time. According to the evidences, in today society, the couples have severe problems in establishing and maintaining the friendly relations. In fact, the problem of marital distress is one of the most reasons for referring the clients to the health centers. Marital adjustment which has been traditionally considered by the psychologists and sociologists is one of the most widespread concepts for determining the happiness and the stability of the relationship. Marital adjustment is a situation in which a couple feel happiness and satisfaction and enjoys being together. From Lieder point of view, adjustment is effective behavior in accordance with the physical and psychological environment so that it does not match against environment changes and it does not suffice for unconscious conformity. The studies show that the couples who are experiencing marital disputes and marital incompatibility are experiencing the defects in the communication skills and are involved in ineffective communication patterns. If the couples do not acquire communication skills and conflict solution, the conflicts will continue verbally and then behaviorally. Thus, the gradual destruction in the marital adjustment will begin.

Keywords: couple therapy, cognitive-behaviorism, marital compatibility, divorce.
In our country the family and marriage is of great importance due to the specific cultural and worthwhile issues. Thus, the efforts for stability and continuity of the family and satisfying the emotional and psychological needs of the members within the family are of the utmost importance. Divorce and family breakdown in addition to disturb the mental-emotional balance of the people lead to the social harm such as children escape from the family, theft, murder and crime. Today, it seems that family; the basic foundation of society has been exposed to collapse. The past two decades studies considered the negative marital interactions as the most powerful factor in the marital dissatisfaction. It should be noted that marriage is not a static and stagnant state between two unchangeable people. There are disputes with the various degrees in some marriages. Although no couples get married with the aim of separation and almost all couples get married in the hope of a long-term life with peace and happiness, many marriages reached an impasse and leads to the separation over the time. According to the evidences, in today society, the couples have severe problems in establishing and maintaining the friendly relations. In fact, the problem of marital distress is one of the most reasons for referring the clients to the health centers. Marital adjustment which has been traditionally considered by the psychologists and sociologists is one of the most widespread concepts for determining the happiness and the stability of the relationship. Marital adjustment is a situation in which a couple feel happiness and satisfaction and enjoys being together. From Lieder point of view, adjustment is effective behavior in accordance with the physical and psychological environment so that it does not match against environment changes and it does not suffice for unconscious conformity. The studies show that the couples who are experiencing marital disputes and marital incompatibility are experiencing the defects in the communication skills and are involved in ineffective communication patterns. If the couples do not acquire communication skills and conflict solution, the conflicts will continue verbally and then behaviorally. Thus, the gradual destruction in the marital adjustment will begin.

Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy is a combination of cognitive and behavioral factors in the treatment of couples with marital problems. In cognitive-behavioral couple therapy the behavioral interaction between the couples is the most important factor. The foundations of cognitive-behavioral couple therapy emphasize on the mutual recognition of couples and consider the knowledge as an inseparable part of the couple change process. From other view, according to the cognitive perspective approach, the distorted perception and irrational thinking are the main reasons of occurring many disorders and problems in the couples. Salarifar (2014), in a study has dealt with designing cognitive-behavioral couple therapy based on Islamic texts and comparing its effectiveness with the developed cognitive-behavioral couple therapy in increasing the couple marital satisfaction. He showed that both methods have significant effects on increasing marital satisfaction of the couples. Amani (2012) in a study compared the effectiveness emotionally focused couple therapy, CBT and integrated emotional-cognitive-behavioral therapies regarding the changes in marital satisfaction and depression in Hamadan women. He showed that all three methods cause to increase marital satisfaction and reducing the depression in women. Farhanian (2010) in a comparison between the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral couple therapy and the rights of spouse from Islam point of view in increasing compatibility and group marital satisfaction in married young women showed that both methods are effective in increasing the compatibility and marital satisfaction.
Method:
The present study included 20 couples who were selected by convenience sampling and randomly divided into test group (n = 10) and control group (n = 10). The type of study was semi-experimental and pre-test post-test with control group. For all divorce applicant couples who had been referred to Bushehr reduction of divorce center first it has been conducted Spanir marital adjustment inventory and then the test group was exposed to the independent variable (cognitive-behavioral therapy sessions; 9 sessions of 90 minutes). Finally, both groups were assessed by post-test. Then pre-test and post-test results were analyzed through single variable covariance analysis.

Performance method:
After placing people in the test group randomly, the cognitive-behavioral couple therapy was conducted within 9 sessions.

Structure of cognitive-behavioral couple therapy sessions:
The first session; explaining the methods and the goals of the sessions.
The second session; studying of expectations and beliefs and fanciful imaginations in the marital relations.
The third session; removing the misunderstandings resulting from misinterpretations or different from each other, replacing reasonable beliefs and expectations, studying the wrong documents and unrealistic expectations, understanding the reciprocal expectations and attention to the positive characteristics of each other.
The fourth session; evaluating the problems of the message transmitter and the receiver.
The fifth session; evaluating the patterns and communication barriers between couples.
The sixth session; understanding the reinforcement and punishment patterns of each couple, increasing the positive reinforcement, reducing the punishment, understanding and objectifying the behavior.
The seventh session; studying the problems and evaluating them.
The eighth session; studying the conflicts between couples, studying the patterns of conflict removing and its consequences, educating and training the methods of conflict removing.
The ninth session; summary and conclusion.

The results:
Table 1-The average and standard deviation of the marital adjustment pre-test and post-test
Table 2 shows the average and the standard deviation of the test group marital adjustment pre-test scores 51 and 18.89 and the average and the standard deviation of the control group marital adjustment pre-test scores 55.4 and 20.31. The average and the standard deviation of the test group marital adjustment post-test scores was respectively 103.05 and 13.36 and the average and the standard deviation of the control group marital adjustment post-test scores was respectively 48.60 and 18.93. Levine test was conducted to investigate the variances homogeneity hypothesis F = 1.26 and the significance level was calculated P = 0.27. Thus, it can be concluded that the variance difference is not significant.

Table 3- the summary of two variables variance analysis of the marital adjustment scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eta coefficient</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Average scores</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Total squares</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>29.756</td>
<td>3365.686</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3365.686</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>281.490</td>
<td>31839.005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31839.005</td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>3.818</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.818</td>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>11.882</td>
<td>1343.916</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1343.916</td>
<td>Group * Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113.109</td>
<td>3958.814</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>Error</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To compare the effectiveness of the individual cognitive-behavioral therapy and control group cognitive-behavioral therapy it has been used the variable covariance analysis as increasing the marital adjustment. After adjusting the scores before intervention and after using group cognitive - behavioral therapy there was a significant difference between the test group and the control group in the post-test scores (F=224/50, df=1,37;P=0/01). Since the average of post-test marital adjustment in the test group (103.05) differs from the average of
post-test marital adjustment in the control group (48.60), it can be concluded that individual cognitive - behavioral therapy is effective in increasing the marital adjustment in the divorce applicant couples.

Discussion:
Regarding the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral group therapy in increasing the marital adjustment the hypothesis" cognitive-behavioral couple therapy is effective in increasing the marital adjustment" was tested. The results of tables 1 and 2 show a significant marital adjustment increase in the test group. The results of this study is consistent with Salarifar studies (2014), Abas, Pourzandagh (2012), Amani (2012), Esbati (2009), Hoyer et al. (2009), Chang and Harvey (2008). The marital adjustment is created under the influence of factors such as understanding the quality of the relationship through mutual interest, taking care of each other, acceptance, understanding and satisfying the needs. In the past decade, the cognitive-behavioral couple therapy is created as a powerful and effective approach for treating the communication problems. The cognitive – behavioral approach consider the marital problems like intimacy as the result of ineffective skills of couples in communicating, the inability to solve the conflicts and problems effectively, irrational expectations and beliefs and negative behavioral exchanges. The goals of cognitive-behavioral therapy in couples include increasing the reinforcing agents and positive exchanges, communication skills training, changing and modifying the thought patterns and methods of conflict solution. The cognitive processes are the main column of cognitive-behavioral method for treating the relationship malfunctions. It has been proven that by cognitive therapy the couples can have more rational behavior through adopting modest behaviors, through revising inappropriate mind reading, through studying of the subjective understanding and through considering the explanations of what their partner is doing.
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