

The Effectiveness of PREPARE-ENRICH Program on Subjective Well-Being and Sexual Self-Efficacy of Iranian Couples

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Abstract

In this study with control group pre-test/post-test design, we aimed to study the effectiveness of PREPARE-ENRICH program developed by Olson (1996) on subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy of couples. Participants were 30 couples supported by the Department of Social Welfare in Tonekabon County in Mazandaran Province of Iran who were referred to the department during 2014. They were divided into two experimental and control groups each had 15 subjects. The experimental group received PREPARE/ENRICH program once a week for seven weeks each session had 90 minutes, while the control group received no intervention. Then both groups were assessed by Persian version of Ryff scale of psychological well-being (long form) and Vaziri-Lotfi (2010)'s Persian language sexual self-efficacy questionnaire. Collected data were analyzed using statistical tests (mean, standard deviation, and MANCOVA, and ANCOVA) in SPSS v.16 software. After conducting the program, statistical results showed a significant difference between two groups in subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy ($P < 0.05$). We found out that the Program had significant effect on subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy of Iranian couples ($p > 0.01$) and was successful in improving these factors among Iranian couples.

Keywords: PREPARE-ENRICH Program, subjective well-being, sexual self-efficacy, Iranian couples.

1. Introduction

A successful marriage can satisfy the many physical and psychological needs (Farasat et al. 2004). All those who want to marry, before marriage, have hopes to achieve a successful life with high durability. They are interested in choosing a suitable partner and live with him/her for a lifetime. They want their family to be healthy and happy, and have one or more children competent and worthy. Understanding and agreement with the spouse, life satisfaction and having a solid marriage are other demands of those who want to marry. But the question is, despite all these wishes, why the current state of marriage is not similar to these demands? The fact is that marriage is always at risk of various complications such as husband addictions, financial problems, and mental, physical or sexual illness of one of the couples. In recent years, the feeling of security, peace and cordial relations between men and women have loosened, and families are increasingly faced with the destructive forces. The divorce statistics indicate that marital satisfaction is not easy to achieve (Taniguchi et al. 2006).

Studies have shown that attitudes, fears, or risks are the underlying causes of sexual problems in marital life. People who have sexual dysfunction are more likely to have low self-esteem and anxiety (Laurent and Simons, 2009; Hartman, 1980), and depression (Reynaert et al, 2010; Barayni et al. 2009). Their sexual relations are influenced by their failure prediction (Duits et al. 2009, and have low well-being (Davidson et al. 2009) and decreased quality of life (Barayni et al. 2009). Based on these findings, we can say that all of the above confirm the role of sexual self-efficacy as a hidden variable in sexual function. On the other hand, the importance of well-being and mental health has been shown in various studies. Happy people experience more positive emotions, and have more positive assessments of the events (Ositer et al. 2000). They have a higher sense of containment and control, and experience more marital satisfaction (Arthaud-Day et al. 2005). Frisch (2005) believes that the study of the well-being of individuals and communities and their progress is the man's biggest scientific challenges after the increase and advances in technology, medicine and wealth. For this reason, today's treatments should focus on reform and change of the quality of life and development of capabilities, enrichment and life satisfaction of people (Joseph and Lindley, 2006). In this regard, the need to investigate the effect of marital satisfaction and its various dimensions, and the importance of a variety of educations including PREPARE-ENRICH program to increase marital satisfaction and consequently, reduce the rate of formal and psychological divorce becomes more evident. Olson et al. (2012) in a study using the PREPARE-ENRICH assessment showed that the application of this program by premarital and married couples would be effective. Yuen et al (2013) showed that this program provide an innovative direction for HIV prevention by applying the personal resilience factors to promote both psychological well-being and safe sex for this high risk population. Considering previous studies, in this paper, our purpose is to investigate the effect of this premarital program on subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy of couples which was conducted in Tonekabon, Iran. We want to answer the following questions:

- Is PREPARE/ENRICH program effective in subjective well-being of Iranian couples?
- Is PREPARE/ENRICH program effective in sexual self-efficacy of Iranian couples?

2. Theoretical concepts

2.1. PREPARE-ENRICH program

PREPARE-ENRICH program teaches the couple relevant relationship skills like communication and conflict resolution. It is for premarital and married couples who want to get their marriage off to a good start or enrich their marriage. PREPARE Inventory was developed by Olson et al. (1978). Its major revision was made by Olson (1996) and expanded into the PREPARE/ENRICH program which has six couple exercises including: 1) Exploring relationship strength and growth areas, 2) Strengthen couple communication skills, including assertiveness and active listening, 3) Resolve couple conflict using the Ten Step Procedure, 4) Explore family-of-origin issues using Couple and Family Map, 5) Develop a workable budget and financial plan, and 6) Develop personal, couple and family goals (Olson and Olson, 1999). “This program applies four important characteristics of an effective preventative approaches. First, factors which relate to marital success need to be identified. Second, couples need to be assessed on those critical variables. Third, feedback and exercises need to be given to couples, which will help them deal with problem areas. Fourth, couples need skill building exercises focusing on communication and conflict resolution skills” (Olson and Olson, 1999: 4).

2.2. Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to person’s positive emotions and general satisfaction with their lives and others in different areas of marriage and work which includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. Cognitive judgments is about his or her life satisfaction and evaluation of life with different domains, and emotional reactions are relative presence of positive affects and the absence of negative affects (Diener et al. 2003). Today, three distinct but related components together are considered for SWB that are overall satisfaction with life, pleasant emotions, and unpleasant emotions. A person who has a high level of satisfaction with their life, and who experiences a greater positive affect and little or less negative affect, would have a high level of SWB.

2.3. Sexual self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is one of important concepts in the theory of Bandura (1997, 2000, and 2001). Bandura (1994) has defined self-efficacy as one's belief about his capabilities to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. With this belief, a person can have more control over his life. It enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. Accordingly, sexual self-efficacy (SSE) is a belief that each person has about his/her ability to have effective and desirable sexual function for his/her partner. Such a belief is a self-assessment of ability and efficiency in sexual behavior. That is why we see that self-esteem and positive attitude among couples are linked with more complete and better sexual satisfaction and happiness, and increase sexual relations and marital affection (Litzinger and Gordon, 2005).

3. Materials and Methods

In this experimental survey study with control group pre-test/post-test design, statistical population consists of 250 spouses (male and female) supported by the Department of Social Welfare in Tonekabon county in Mazandaran Province of Iran who were referred to the department during 2014. From 76 couples who had low level of SWB (after answering to Persian version of Ryff 's psychological well-being inventory), and low sexual self-efficacy score (after answering to Vaziri-Lotfi (2010)'s Persian language sexual self-efficacy questionnaire), 30 couples were randomly selected for the study and divided into two experimental and control groups each had 15 subjects. The experimental group were trained by PREPARE/ENRICH program once a week for seven weeks, each session had 90 minutes; the control group did not receive training. After the training sessions, both groups were post-tested. The tools for measuring participants were:

- A. *Ryff scale of psychological well-being (RSPWB)*: The Ryff inventory was developed by Ryff and Keyes (1995) which consists of 84 questions (long form), 54 questions (medium form), or 18 questions (short form). It has six scales including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self -acceptance which are rated from 1 to 6 (1= strong disagreement and 6= strong agreement). In this study we used its long form written in Persian with acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha=0.82$) (Bayani et al. 2008).
- B. *Vaziri-Lotfi's Persian language sexual self-efficacy questionnaire*: This questionnaire was presented by Vaziri and Lotfi Kashani (2008) which was developed based on General Self-Efficacy Scale of Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) and has acceptable reliability and validity ($\alpha=0.86\%$). It has 10 items based on a 4-point scale rated from 0= Not at all true, to 3= Exactly true. It is self-assessment of ability and efficiency in sexual behavior.

To analyze the collected data we used statistical tests including mean, standard deviation, and multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) in SPSS v.16 software.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Table 1 presents the statistics (including mean and standard deviation) of subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy scores of participants in the experimental and control groups before and after the test. Results showed that mean of SWB and SSE were increased after conducting the PREPARE/ENRICH program, so there was mean difference between them. Adjusted mean of dependent variables (SWB and SSE) are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy scores

Variables	Experimental group				Control group			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
SWB	225.33	6.672	253.73	13.035	219.00	8.928	221.66	9.581
SSE	22.66	2.690	24.53	3.583	21.06	2.463	20.20	2.908

Table 2. Adjusted mean of dependent variables in both groups

Variables	Experimental group		Control group	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
SWB	250.20	3.057	225.19	3.057
SSE	23.65	0.295	21.08	0.295

4.2. Testing the effectiveness of PREPARE-ENRICH program on SWB and SSE

Before conducting MANCOVA test, we test the overall relationship between the variables. For this purpose first we evaluate the assumption of linearity and homogeneity of regression and equality of error variances. Figure 1 shows the scatterplot that display the relationship between dependent variables (posttest SSE and posttest SWB scores). As can be seen, the default linear relationship between the dependent variables is met.

Figure 1. Scatterplot of participants’ posttest SWB against posttest SSE

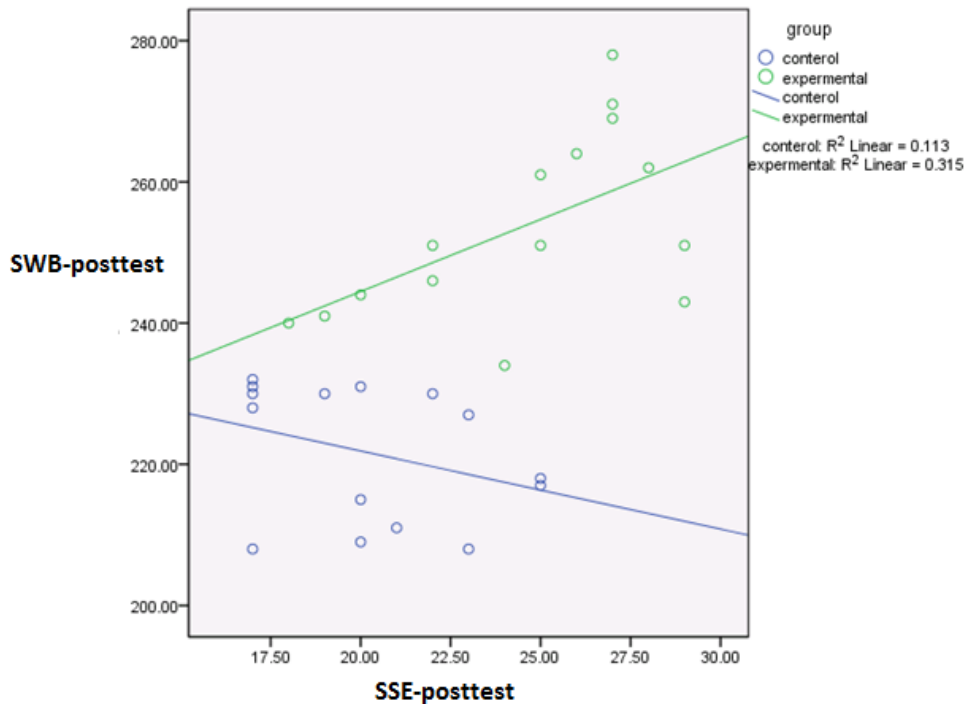


Table 3 shows the results of homogeneity test for dependent variables. Box's M tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups. The Box's M test statistic is transformed to an F statistic with df1 and df2 degrees of freedom. Here, the significance value of the test is larger than 0.05, suggesting that the homogeneity assumption is met.

Table 3. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices

Box' s M	7.421
F	2.282
df1	3
df2	141120.000
Sig.	0.077

Table 4 shows the results of testing equality of error variances between the SWB and SSE. The significance value for SWB and SSE were greater than 0.05, so there were not statistically significant and therefore, the assumption of equality of error variances is not violated and we can use the MANCOVA test.

Table 4. Levene's test of equality of error variances

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
SWB	2.407	1	28	0.132
SSE	0.374	1	28	0.546

Main hypothesis: PREPARE/ENRICH program affects the subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy of couples

The correlation test results between the SWB and SSE reported that the correlation coefficient was 0.572. Since p-value is less than 0.01, therefore we can say that there is significant relationship between than at 90% confidence level. In this respect, we can use the MANCOVA test. Table 5 presents the results of MANCOVA test which include Partial eta square (η^2) (shows how much variance is explained by the independent variable) and F ratio obtained from Wilks' lambda test (a test statistic to test whether there are differences between the means of identified groups of subjects on a combination of dependent variables). MANCOVA test revealed a significant multivariate main effect for the PREPARE/ENRICH program (Wilk's $\lambda=0.313$, F (1, 25)=488.27, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2= 0.687$). Wilks' lambda (λ) is larger than 0.14 which shows the programs' high effect. According to the results, the primary hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 5. Multivariate test

Source	Wilks' lambda Value	F (1, 25)	Sig.	Partial eta square
Combined variable (SWB and SSE)	0.313	488.27	0.000	0.687

Table 6 shows the results of one-way ANCOVA analysis. Since it has two dependent variables, Bonferroni correction was applied which sets the significance cut-off at α/n ; so we divide 0.05 by the number of tests ($n=2$), so the significant level should be less than 0.025 which is evident in both variables. According to the results, there is significant difference between the means of two groups in subjective well-being, and we are 99% confident that PREPARE/ENRICH program has significant effect on subjective well-being of Iranian couples and improve its level

($F(1, 26) = 27.876, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.517$). This confirms our first secondary hypothesis which stated that PREPARE/ENRICH program affects the subjective well-being. Also, according to the results presented in table 6, a significant difference between the means of two groups in sexual self-efficacy was found, and with 99% confidence we can say that PREPARE/ENRICH program has significant effect on in sexual self-efficacy of Iranian couples and can improve it. ($F(1, 26) = 31.741, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.550$). This confirms the second secondary hypothesis which stated that PREPARE/ENRICH program affects sexual self-efficacy.

Table 6. Tests of between-subjects effects

Source		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	η^2
SWB	Posttest	3124.669	1	3124.669	27.876	0.000	0.517
	Error	2914.419	26	112.093			
SSE	Posttest	33.081	1	33.081	31.741	0.000	0.550
	Error	27.098	26	1.042			

5. Conclusion

When we closely examine the marriage, and try to understand the reasons for dissatisfaction and conflict between couples, we can see that this is not due to incompatibility of couples but because of their expectations of married life that is in conflict with each other. By training intimacy among couples, the expression of sexual and physical intimacy, training how to improve sexual relations, and expressing the cycle of sexual problems as well as examining the practices of conflict resolution through problem solving, a person's belief for trying to achieve the desired goals can have a significant impact on the effectiveness. In this experimental study we evaluated the effectiveness of Olson' PREPARE-ENRICH Program on subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy of couples in Tonekabon county of Iran. According to the results of MANCOVA test that supported the main hypothesis of the study, we found out that PREPARE-ENRICH Program had significant effect on both subjective well-being and sexual self-efficacy of Iranian couples ($p < 0.01$). So we can say that this program leads to an increased life satisfaction of Iranian couples. As a result, they learned to respect each other in a successful marriage. With more mutual respect, marital satisfaction and mental health will be improved. This program also helped them to correct the negative attitudes that they had towards the opposite sex, and improved their sexual function.

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