



The effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on marital burnout and resilience of young couples

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Abstract

Aim: Due to the lack of experience and resilience in marital conflicts, young couples are more exposed to marital heartbreak and as a result tend to divorce. This research was conducted with the aim of determining the effectiveness of emotion-focused couple therapy on marital burnout and resilience of young couples. **Methods:** A quasi-experimental research method was used with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group. 30 couples (30 men and 30 women) were selected from the statistical population of young couples who referred to family counseling centers in the 1st district of Tehran using the available sampling method and were replaced in two experimental and control groups using a random method. The research tools were marital burnout (Pines, 1996), resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The research findings were analyzed using SPSS version 23 software and analysis of variance with repeated measurements. **Results:** The results showed that emotional couple therapy has a significant and stable effect on reducing marital boredom and increasing resilience of young couples ($p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** Therefore, in order to improve marital burnout and resilience of young couples, it is suggested to use the emotion-oriented couple therapy approach.

Keywords: *emotion-focused couple therapy, marital burnout, resilience, young couples.*

Introduction

The family is the most important institution of human society, which is considered the most fundamental and the first institution of society, and the first step to establish this social institution is marriage (Navabinejad et al., 2023). In other words, family is known as the most important unit of societies and marriage is the most basic human relationship because it forms the primary structure of family relationship and the growth of the next generations (Darbani & Parsakia, 2022). People get married for many reasons such as happiness, having children, intimate relationships, sexual satisfaction and society's satisfaction. In fact, people consider marriage as the most intimate adult relationship, which is the main source of affection and support for them (Montesi et al., 2013). A satisfying marriage can increase emotional, social and physical intimacy between young couples. In the meantime, young couples are more vulnerable due to lack of experience in solving marital problems (Bergeron et al., 2021). Factors that can cause damage to married life and reduce or destroy love between couples can cause marital burnout (Bozkoro et al., 2022).

Boredom is a physical, emotional and mental breakdown that will result from the lack of fit between expectations and reality. Marital boredom occurs due to a set of illogical and unrealistic expectations, going through emotions, couples being careless and inattentive to each other and to each other's needs, not expressing their feelings and needs to each other, and the ups and downs of life (Pines, 2013).

One of the psychological characteristics that can strengthen a couple's relationship is resilience (Heifner, 2021). Resilience is one of the personality traits that people possess are able to efficiently solve interpersonal challenges and tensions. Connor and Davidson (2001) defines resilience as the ability and capacity of people to overcome stress, accidents and disasters. In recent years, the approach of positive psychology, with the slogan of paying attention to human talents and capabilities, has attracted the attention of researchers in various fields of psychology (Pulido et al., 2020). Therefore, resilience and how to deal with the marital tension of young couples and the factors affecting it are of special importance. A person's successful coping with stressors and difficult situations is called resilience (Cheng et al., 2020).

Today, various approaches of couple therapy and family therapy have been created with the aim of reducing conflicts and communication confusion between couples. The goal of couples therapy is to help couples adapt more appropriately to current problems and learn effective communication methods (Johnson et al., 2018). One of the couples therapy in solving marital problems of couples is an emotion-oriented approach. The emotion-oriented approach is one of the approaches that focuses both on the communication of family members and on individual emotions (Johnson et al., 2010). Emotion-oriented couple therapy is a short-term integrative approach that essentially includes client-centered therapeutic approaches, Gestalt therapy, and cognitive principles (Greenman & Johnson, 2022). Emotions organize the structure of inner experience and relationships with others. They are also key tools of change. Experiencing and expressing emotions associated with interpersonal vulnerability (e.g., sadness, fear), along with comforting responses

from significant others and the therapist, leads to key changes in therapeutic work such as "softening the stalker" in couples (Beasley & Ager, 2019).

According to the problem raised, the purpose of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on marital burnout and resilience of young couples.

Method

A quasi-experimental research method was used with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group. 30 couples (30 men and 30 women) were selected from the statistical population of young couples who referred to family counseling centers in the 1st district of Tehran using the available sampling method and were replaced in two experimental and control groups using a random method. The research tools were marital burnout (Pines, 1996), resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The research findings were analyzed using SPSS version 23 software and analysis of variance with repeated measurements.

Results

The average of marital boredom and resilience of couples in the group of emotion-oriented couples therapy in the post-test and follow-up test stage compared to the pre-test was significantly different, and there was no noticeable difference between the post-test and the follow-up test; There was a slight difference in the scores of the three times of the test of the control group.

Wilks's lambda multivariate test indicates the significance of the variance of the interaction between group and time in both variables ($P < .01$). According to the effect size in the variables of marital boredom 0.58 and resilience 0.61, it is clear that the effect of emotion-oriented couple therapy intervention on reducing marital boredom and increasing resilience of young couples is positive and significant. In order to compare the results in the test stages (pre-test, post-test and follow-up test), pairwise comparison was used

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean of pre-test and post-test, mean of pre-test and follow-up ($P < 0.01$). The mean of the post-test and follow-up is statistically lower than the mean of the pre-test in the marital boredom variable and resilience is higher. There is no statistically significant difference between the average scores of the post-test and the average scores of the follow-up test, which indicates the stability of the results affected by the therapeutic intervention over time. Therefore, emotion-oriented couple therapy has affected the marital burnout and resilience of young couples, and this effect has remained stable over time.

Conclusion

This research was conducted with the aim of determining the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy on marital burnout and resilience of young couples. The first result of the research showed that emotion-oriented couple therapy has a significant and lasting effect on reducing the marital boredom of young couples.

In explaining this result of the research, it can be said that in emotion-oriented couple therapy sessions, couples were taught to know their interactive cycle, transform negative emotions into positive ones, and move from insecure to secure

attachment. The experience of personal security can bring secure attachment into married life, since the spouse is one of the sources of attachment, and when women feel secure in their marital relationship, they certainly feel committed in that relationship. In the meetings, by teaching them effective communication techniques, it improved their daily, private, close relationships and increased marital satisfaction and ultimately reduced marital boredom between them.

Emotion-oriented couple therapy focuses more on the arrangement of communication and emotions in couples' relationships. According to this approach, if people are not able to share their attachment needs in the areas of satisfaction and security with each other, communication conflicts begin and intensify. The emphasis of this approach is on the adaptive communication method, through care, support and mutual attention for the needs of the individual and the other party. This approach can have a positive effect on marital relationship problems by using techniques such as examining couples' relationships, focusing on emotions, the empty chair technique, and tracking known emotions. Therefore, with the increase of experiences arising from secure attachment, the marital boredom of young couples decreased.

The limitations of this research were the use of non-random and available sampling method and the questionnaire tool alone. Therefore, the generalization of the results of this research will require the implementation of research in the society and different samples using random sampling method.

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