



# Investigating the effect of emotion-oriented couple counseling on the threatened self-image of couples

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## Abstract

**Aim:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of emotion-oriented couple counseling on threatened self-image. **Method:** The method of this research was semi-experimental and pre-test-post-test type with a control group. The statistical population of this research included couples who referred to the family culture center and counseling centers in Isfahan city. To select the desired sample, 40 couples (80 people) were selected as volunteers and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (20 couples in the experimental group and 20 couples in the control group). The research tool was the threatened self-image from the NI-90 questionnaire. The independent variable was emotion-oriented couple counseling, which was applied to the experimental group in 10 sessions. **Results:** The results of covariance analysis showed that emotion-oriented couple counseling had an effect on the threatened self-image, but it had no effect on the dimensions of hope, distortion of reality, departure to a feeling of harmony, and the threatened self variable. **Conclusion:** it can be concluded that emotion-oriented couple counseling reduces the self-threatening image of couples.

**Keywords:** *emotion-oriented couple counseling, negative emotions, threatened self-image*

## Introduction

On the other hand, continuous disturbances and divorce impose a lot of psychological and social costs on individuals and society. Cultural changes in the last half century have greatly influenced the expectations and experiences of couples. In recent years, peace and intimate relations between men and women have become weak and divorce and separation have increased. Therefore, if there is a time when experts need effective couple therapy models more than ever, that time is now (Hosseini, 2011).

One of the problems of people with various disorders is their unfavorable experience of themselves, which originates from the unfavorable experience that is generally from past bitter memories and ineffective coping with them, and may be seen as self-negative, self-distorted, self-confined, and self-incompetent. Ineffective, distorted, or negative self-images negatively affect the goals one is trying to achieve. Therefore, in examining the threatened self, the goal is to rewrite the images related to oneself (Stupa, 2012). The perception or negative perception of being evaluated by others and as a result the occurrence of aggressive and antisocial behavior is called self-threat (Bamister, 1996). Due to these problems, helping couples and families is felt, among the couple therapy approaches, until now, emotions were not given much attention as a factor of change. In fact, in the field of couple therapy until now, there was a phobia of emotions (Goldman and Greenberg, 1992).

"Self" is one of the foundations of personality, which is emphasized in most theories of personality in psychology. It is possible to consider oneself as the starting point of personal correction and treatment in psychology. Self, one of the dominant aspects of human experience, is about the forced feeling of self-existence (Davila, 2001). What is desired in psychology about self, myself and me, refers to one's actions and characteristics, which can be measured and measured. This term has been proposed in different theories and branches of psychology, especially in the field of social, developmental, personality and pathological psychology. Self-theories are a system of theories in psychology, especially in the topics related to personality psychology, which focus on the explanation and explanation of the phenomenon, evolution and formation of personal identity and self. If in psychology the starting point of psychological studies is nature, then it can rightly be considered as the starting point of personal correction and treatment in psychology. Self is one of the dominant aspects of human experience about the forced feeling of self existence. For this reason, he attributes all his actions to it (Hosseini, 2017).

One of the most valid approaches to couple therapy, which looks at couple relationships from an attachment perspective, is emotion-oriented therapy (Johnson et al., 2003). This approach is a structured and short-term approach in couple therapy that is based on clear concepts of marital helplessness, recognition of emotions, adult love and emotional responses (Rostami et al., 2018); According to this point of view, marital disturbances are created and continued by pervasive states of negative emotion and attachment injuries, inattention to inner needs and desires, negative interaction patterns, and inappropriate emotional experience. Therefore, during the treatment, in order to improve the relationships of the spouses and free them from marital and family problems, the defective interactive cycle should be eliminated.

Despite the effectiveness and very good empirical support of emotion-oriented couple therapy abroad, few articles and researches have been devoted to this approach in Iran. According to the studies, the effects of this treatment approach on couples' marital stress, as well as on negative emotions and threatened self-image, have not been investigated in Iran, and most of the studies are focused on marital compatibility and couples' satisfaction. Sufficient knowledge of the effectiveness and dimensions The effectiveness of this type of couple therapy, which emphasizes emotional and emotional aspects in addition to cognitive aspects, can help in choosing the correct type of therapy according to the client's problems and its predictable results. This research has also taken a step towards checking its efficiency by examining this approach. Therefore, the main goal of the present study was to investigate the effect of emotion-oriented couples counseling on the threatened self-image of couples, and the following research questions were addressed:

- 1- Is emotion-oriented couple counseling effective on the threatened self-image of couples in the post-test phase?
- 2- Is emotional couple counseling on the threatened self-image of couples stable in the follow-up phase?

#### **Method**

The method of this research was semi-experimental and pre-test-post-test type with a control group. The statistical population of this research included couples who referred to the family culture center and counseling centers in Isfahan city. To select the desired sample, 40 couples (80 individuals) were selected as volunteers and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (20 couples in the experimental group and 20 couples in the control group). The research tool was the threatened self-image from the NI-90 questionnaire. The independent variable was emotion-oriented couple counseling, which was applied to the experimental group in 10 sessions.

#### **Results**

The average and standard deviation of the age of the research sample are divided by gender, as can be seen, the average age among men is 35.35 years and among women is 31.23 years. Also, the average and standard deviation of the length of marriage of the research sample is given. As can be seen, the average length of marriage in the experimental group is 7.7 years and the control group is 6.4 years.

The results of the Benfrini test show that the difference in the mean scores of self-threat ( $P=0.001$ ) between the pre-test, post-test and follow-up phases is significant, but the mean difference between the post-test and follow-up is not significant in the research variable. It indicates that the results obtained in the follow-up phase did not return and the effect of the intervention was stable.

#### **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of emotion-oriented couple counseling on threatened self-image. The main hypothesis of the research is that the effect of emotion-oriented couple therapy on the threatened self-image was significant. In other words, the results showed that there is a significant difference in the self-threatened variable between the two test and control groups, so emotional couple therapy is effective on the self-threatened image of the test group, and the research hypothesis was confirmed.

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