



# comparing the effectiveness of Bowen's family-based approach and Minuchin's structural family therapeutic approach on improving communication patterns and reducing marital conflicts in women suffering from emotional divorce

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## Abstract

**Aim:** Emotional divorce as a social harm is the first step in the divorce process and indicates the severity of marital conflicts originating from numerous factors such as the malfunctioning of couples' communication patterns. Hence, the present study aimed at comparing the effectiveness of Bowen's family-based approach and Minuchin's structural family therapeutic approach on improving communication patterns and reducing marital conflicts in women suffering from emotional divorce. **Method:** The quasi-experimental research method was based on pretest-posttest along with a control group. The population included all the women suffering from marital conflicts referring to the Central Welfare Organization of Isfahan in the first three months of the year 1399. After sifting through the subjects, 45 samples were selected by simple random sampling and were categorized into two experimental and control groups. The tools applied in the research were the scale of communication patterns and marital conflicts. The samples of the experimental group attended the Bowen's and Minuchin's family therapeutic training programs, but the control group did not receive any particular training. Finally, the data were analyzed at two levels of descriptive statistics (the Mean and the Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (the analysis of Covariance and the analysis of Variance with multivariable frequent measuring) using SPSS software. **Results:** Findings revealed that both Bowen's and Minuchin's therapeutic approaches can be effective on communication patterns and marital conflicts. In addition, a significant difference was noticed between the effectiveness of the two experimental groups (Bowen's and Minuchin's) on communication patterns of women suffering from emotional divorce, and the comparison of means suggested that family and structural therapy of Minuchin performed better. And finally, no significant difference was noticed between the effectiveness of the two experimental groups (Bowen's and Minuchin's) on marital conflicts in women suffering from emotional divorce, and only after lessening relationship with relatives, the structural effectiveness of Minuchin's approach proved to be better. **Conclusions:** Therefore, Bowen's and Minuchin's therapeutic approaches can both be helpful in reducing the rate of marital conflicts and improving the communication patterns of women suffering from emotional divorce, and consequently, reducing emotional divorce and increasing marital adjustments.

**Keywords:** Bowen and Minuchin family therapy, communication patterns, marital conflicts, emotional divorce.

## Introduction

The family is the most important institution of the society, whose health and strength affects the whole society, and any damage and deterioration to this institution and its functions can lead to disruption of social order and cohesion (Roshani, 2010). The World Health Organization has introduced the family as the primary social factor in increasing the health and well-being of its members (Heidari, 2016). Therefore, the stability of marriage is one of the most important issues that plays an important role in the general health of the individual and society.

The type of interactions between couples in their living environment has a direct relationship with their feeling of misery or happiness. Past researches have identified specific marital behaviors in couples' communication patterns, which serve as both risk factors and protective factors for the satisfaction and stability of the couple's relationship (Dastan, 2015). In fact, the family is a unique communication system that is beyond other relationships. Disturbed communication patterns have a significant effect on the physical health and mental health of family members (Javan, 2017). Therefore, understanding how its members communicate can be a key factor in creating flexibility and reducing or increasing the risks associated with unfortunate events and inappropriate conditions and adopting a written program to prevent marital conflicts (Abedin Nia, 2015).

On the other hand, in relation to communication patterns and marital conflicts; Husband and wife discuss all marital issues with each other and shape their communication patterns in these conversations. So; Not necessarily the conflict itself, but the way of coping with the conflict can be destructive or constructive (Rahimpour et al., 2018). It is natural for differences and conflicts to arise between husband and wife. Due to the nature of spouses' activities, it sometimes happens that differences of opinion occur or needs are not met; As a result, spouses feel anger, frustration and dissatisfaction towards each other (Navabinejad et al., 2023). Conflict is not always negative, but it is a method that couples use to manage their flawed relationship, but this can have a negative effect on the relationship (Darbani & Parsakia, 2022). In other words, the precursor to the separation of couples is the marital conflict, which starts from simple gossip and can expand to verbal conflicts, fights and beatings, and sometimes separation. Marital conflicts increase when different degrees of independence or dependence of couples are needed for cooperation and decision-making (Darbani & Parsakia, 2022).

"Emotional divorce" is a symbol of problems in healthy and correct communication between husband and wife. This communication problem at a small level (family) can also spread and spread in a wider dimension (society) and disrupt human communication. When the institution of the family is shaken, the moral and social foundations of the entire social system are shaken and the society is pushed towards problems (Ismaili, 2018). If there has been less talk about emotional divorce and its consequences in the past, perhaps one of the reasons is that the number of emotional divorce cases was not as high as it is today. Today, social life has been formed in a way that has caused more separation and division and breaking apart of family ties.

In recent years, the costs of psychiatric care have grown dramatically in different countries. The controlled care approach that has been formed in recent decades in the field of psychiatric services in developed countries aims to reduce treatment

costs (Roshani, 2010). Therefore, researchers compare treatment approaches to choose the most efficient and least expensive treatment among various treatments. Of course, sometimes this leads to the discovery that the integration of different treatment methods is more effective than each of the treatment methods alone. Among the current treatments to improve family communication patterns and resolve marital conflicts, Bowen's family-oriented approach and Minuchin's structural approach are more important. A review of the research literature on family communication patterns and marital conflicts shows that despite the existence of theoretical and research relationships in relation to each of the variables, no research has investigated the desired structures in the form of a comparison of therapeutic approaches. According to the mentioned materials, the present research seeks to answer the question that; Is there a difference between the effectiveness of Bowen's family-centered approach and Minuchin's structural family therapy in improving communication patterns and marital conflicts of emotionally divorced women?

### **Method**

The quasi-experimental research method was based on pretest-posttest along with a control group. The population included all the women suffering from marital conflicts referring to the Central Welfare Organization of Isfahan in the first three months of the year 1399. After sifting through the subjects, 45 samples were selected by simple random sampling and were categorized into two experimental and control groups. The tools applied in the research were the scale of communication patterns and marital conflicts. The samples of the experimental group attended the Bowen's and Minuchin's family therapeutic training programs, but the control group did not receive any particular training. Finally, the data were analyzed at two levels of descriptive statistics (the Mean and the Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (the analysis of Covariance and the analysis of Variance with multivariable frequent measuring) using SPSS software.

### **Results**

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the marital conflict dimensions of the Minuchin group and the Bowen group with the control group, so it can be concluded that the effect of both approaches is stable in the follow-up phase. The results of the pairwise comparison in the dimension of decreased cooperation showed that there was no significant difference between the two experimental groups (Bowen and Minuchin) in the post-test phase, but the difference between the Bowen family therapy group and the control group, as well as the Minuchin family therapy group and the control group, was significant. The results of the pairwise comparison after the reduction of sexual intercourse show that there is no significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minuchin) in the post-test phase, but the difference between the Bowen family therapy group and the control group, as well as the Minuchin family therapy group and the control group, was significant. The results of the pairwise comparison in the dimension of emotional response showed that there was no significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minuchin) in the post-test phase, but the difference between the Bowen family therapy group and the control group, as well as the Minuchin family therapy group and the control group, was significant. The results of the pairwise comparison in the dimension of child support showed that in the post-test stage, there was no significant difference

between the two experimental groups (Bowen and Minuchin) and the Minochin family therapy group and the control group, and the only difference between the Bowen family therapy group and the control group was significant. . The results of the pairwise comparison after increasing the relationship with relatives showed that there was no significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minuchin) as well as the Bowen family therapy group and the control, and only the difference between the Minuchin family therapy group and the control was significant. The results of the pairwise comparison in the dimension of reducing the relationship with the family showed that in the post-test stage, there is a significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minochin) as well as the Minochin family therapy group and the control group, but the difference between the Bowen family therapy group and the control group was not significant. . The results of the pairwise comparison in the dimension of separating financial affairs showed that there is no significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minuchin) in the post-test phase; The difference between the Bowen family therapy group - control and also the Mino Chin family therapy group and the control was significant. The results of the pairwise comparison in the dimension of reducing effective communication showed that in the post-test stage, there was no significant difference between the two experimental groups (Bowen and Minochin), as well as the Minochin family therapy group and the control group, and the only difference between the Bowen family therapy group and the control group was significant.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of communication patterns of the Minuchin group and the Bowen group with the control group, so it can be concluded that the effect of both approaches is stable in the follow-up phase. The results of the pairwise comparison in the conversation dimension showed that there was a significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minuchin) in the post-test phase, and the comparison of the averages indicated the better performance of Minuchin's structural family therapy. The results of the pairwise comparison in the homogeneity dimension showed that there is no significant difference between the two test groups (Bowen and Minuchin) and each of the test and control groups in the post-test phase.

### **Conclusion**

Bowen and Minuchin's therapeutic approaches can both be helpful in reducing the rate of marital conflicts and improving the communication patterns of women suffering from emotional divorce, and consequently, reducing emotional divorce and increasing marital adjustments.

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