



# Comparison of the Effectiveness of Couple Therapy in the Way of Psychodrama and Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT) on Improving Conflict Resolution Tactics in Contradictory Couples

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## Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of the present study was to compare the effectiveness of Psychodrama Couple Therapy and Integrated Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT) on improving conflict resolution tactics of contradictory couples.

**Method:** The method of this semi-experimental study is pre-test/post-test with a control group and a follow-up phase. The statistical population included all conflicting couples who referred to Dramatherapy Center of Iran in 2019. The sample of this study includes 36 persons (18 couples) who referred to Dramatherapy Center of Iran who were selected by the available sampling method. Then they were assigned in 3 groups of 12 persons including two experimental groups and one control group. The first experimental group underwent 12 sessions of Psychodrama Couple Therapy by Moreno (1969) and the second experimental group underwent 12 sessions of Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy by Christensen et al. (2014). Data were obtained by using Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) by Straus (1996) and analyzed by methods of repeated measure analysis of variance using spss22 software. **Results:** The results of this study showed that Psychodrama Couple Therapy reduced physical assault ( $P=11.52$  and  $p=0.001$ ) and psychological violence ( $F=12.74$  and  $P=0.001$ ) and increased non-violent negotiation ( $F=58.84$  and  $P=0.001$ ) in the victim form and respectively physical assault ( $F=17.963$  and  $P=0.001$ ), psychological violence ( $F=17.08$  and  $P=0.001$ ) and non-violent negotiation ( $F=89.45$  and  $P=0.001$ ) in the aggressive form.

**Conclusion:** The results indicated the effectiveness of Psychodrama Couple Therapy on reducing physical assault and psychological violence and increasing non-violent negotiation in conflicting couples and its durability over time. Therefore, health professionals and therapists can use Psychodrama Couple Therapy along with other treatment methods to improve couples' conflict resolution tactics.

**Keywords:** Conflict Resolution Tactics, Couple Therapy, Psychodrama, Integrated Behavioral Couple Therapy.

## Introduction

Marital life is one of the most important human institutions, consisting of two people with different abilities and talents, different needs and interests, and different personalities (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2020). The family is considered the most fundamental institution throughout human history and civilization and the most important pillar of society. Peace in the family is based on a warm and correct relationship between parents as parents or as a couple. Couples who experience deep, logical, friendly and intimate emotional relationships are successful, self-confident and happy (Gillpatrick, 2021).

Psychodrama can be mentioned among the therapeutic methods that can improve conflict resolution strategies in couples. Psychodrama, as one of the disciplines connecting performing arts and psychological science, is a non-pharmacological and auxiliary therapy that, in addition to educational, empowering and educational aspects, is also used to treat many mental and psychological disorders. Time in psychodrama is always the present time and paying attention to the present time; The philosophy of living in the moment increases creativity and attention to spontaneity.

According to Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy, even the happiest and healthiest couples may face problems and differences over time, which is a natural and inevitable issue. It is easy for many couples to accept and tolerate these differences in the early stages of a marital relationship. However, these differences become problematic when they arise from their vulnerabilities, not from their different preferences (Gorman, 2019). Integrative behavioral couple therapy helps couples learn to talk more about their intractable problems without blaming each other or pressuring each other to change. Also, couples finish integrated behavioral couple therapy, having learned to express their emotions more gently and clearly (Kudva & Jacobson, 2018).

Considering the said contents and the high importance of the foundation of the family and efforts to maintain and improve the mental health of its members; Also, the inevitability of conflict in interpersonal relationships in the family, it seems that methods that lead to learning the correct ways to resolve conflict between couples can be useful. This pioneering research was conducted after reviewing the previous studies and considering the research gap in the field of psychodrama couple therapy among studies in Iran. The research question is: Is there a difference between the effectiveness of psychodrama couple therapy and integrated behavioral couple therapy on couples' conflict resolution tactics?

## Method

The current research is applied in terms of its purpose and quasi-experimental in terms of the implementation method of the pre-test-post-test type with a control group. The statistical population of this research includes all conflicted couples who were referred to Iran Drama Therapy Center in 2019. To select the sample using the available sampling method, 36 people (18 couples) were selected and assigned using random replacement in three groups of 12 people (6 couples), including two experimental groups and one control group.

## Results

The results of Bonferroni's post hoc test show that the experimental groups had a significant decrease in the scores of the components of physical attack and psychological violence of the victim and aggressive form compared to the control group; The experimental group of psychodrama couple therapy has decreased more scores in these components than the combined behavioral couple therapy group.

The results also show that the experimental groups had higher scores in the non-violent negotiation component than the control group, and the psychodrama-based couple therapy experimental group had higher scores in this component than the integrated behavioral couple therapy group.

## Conclusion

The research results show that controlling the pre-test between the groups before and after the training shows a significant difference between the effectiveness of psychodrama couple therapy and integrated behavioral couple therapy on conflict resolution tactics. In other words, psychodrama couple therapy and integrated behavioral couple therapy have reduced the physical and psychological violence of couples as well as increased non-violent negotiation between couples.

Based on the research findings, both psychodrama and integrated behavioral couple therapy approaches are effective and can be used to improve couples' conflict resolution tactics.

Since the participants voluntarily participated in the experiment in the initial selection, social desirability may have affected the results. Also, this research project coincided with the environmental problems and relatively severe air pollution in Tehran in the fall of 2019. This led to problems regarding the coordination of couples to participate in training sessions. One of the most important limitations in conducting the current research was the weakness of the conflict resolution tactics questionnaire in correctly measuring the items. In this questionnaire, the number of times couples may engage in different behaviors in the face of differences in their relationship, all in the last year, is measured. This issue was problematic in the post-test; Because it should have been explained to the couples that they should consider the period from pre-test to post-test as a criterion, not last year. Since the research in the field of psychodrama and especially psychodrama couple therapy in Iran is an almost innovative type of research, therefore, researchers had very few sources to compare the results of psychodrama couple therapy. Also, the time limit for conducting this research caused the researchers to not have enough time to measure the changes over time.

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