

The effectiveness of realistic acceptance and commitment therapy (RACT) on marital burnout and alexithymia in couples

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The consequence of the lack of expressing emotions is the intensification of unpleasant thoughts and negative arousal in people, and this is known as one of the most important factors of marital conflicts. These self-inflicted negative thoughts ultimately strengthen the cycle of increasing dissatisfaction with marriage, the feeling of marital exhaustion and boredom; So, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of RACT on marital burnout and alexithymia in couples.

Method: The purpose of the current research was applied, and the way it was conducted was quasi-experimental with a pre-test and post-test design with an experimental group and a control group and a two-month follow-up period. The statistical population of the research included all the couples referring to private counseling centers in the 5th district of Tehran in 2021. 30 couples were selected using the available sampling method and randomly assigned to an experimental group (15 couples) and a control group (15 couples). On the experimental group, a group intervention based on RACT was conducted based on the package compiled by Afshari et al. (2022). The research tools included Pines Marital Depression Questionnaire (1996) and Toronto Alexithymia (TAS-20). SPSS-26 software and mixed variance analysis with three-stage repeated measures were used for statistical analysis of data.

Results: Based on the findings, there was a significant difference between the scores of marital burnout and alexithymia of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages. The results of the analysis of the findings indicate that the RACT had a significant effect on the marital burnout and alexithymia of the experimental group. The effectiveness RACT was stable in the follow-up phase according to the Bonferroni post-hoc test.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, it can be concluded that RACT can be used in family counseling and couple therapy centers to reduce marital burnout and Alexithymia of couples.

Keywords: RACT, marital burnout, Alexithymia, couples.

1. Introduction

One of the important variables which attracted researchers' attention in the studies of couples and marital relationships is *marital burnout*, which is opposite to marital intimacy. Many spouses start their life together with love; at this time, they never think that one day the flame of their love may fade away. Marital burnout is a gradual process and settles bit by bit in our psyche. Marital burnout is so effective that it can even affect our body. Marital burnout has three signs. Physical symptoms are one of these factors. Some people define boredom as a kind of tired feeling. Besides tiredness and boredom, those suffering from depression also show symptoms such as lethargy, chronic headaches, abdominal pains, and anorexia or overeating. The burned-out couples are also physically exhausted (Pines, 1996). Eliss (1986) states that newly married couples are less likely to think that their legendary love may fade at some point, and this is when burnout begins. Falling out of love is a gradual process and rarely occurs suddenly. In fact, intimacy and love gradually fade in marital burnout, and along with it, a feeling of general fatigue occurs. In its most severe form, boredom is equal to the relationship's collapse (Pines, 1996). Therefore, the existence of a relationship between marital burnout and emotional alexithymia does not seem far-fetched. Marital burnout is characterized by persistent physical, emotional, and mental fatigue symptoms, resulting in tension, frustration, and falling into a trap with a loss of passion, energy, and purpose in people (Capri, 2013). Marital burnout is a gradual loss of emotional attachment, which includes a decrease in attention to the spouse, emotional alienation, and an increase in feelings of discouragement and indifference towards the spouse's feelings (Mazzarantani, 2011). In fact, when couples start intimate relationships with each other, each of them enters the relationship with a set of dreams and expectations. When stressful and incompatible experiences replace these expectations, the marital relationship is damaged, which is referred to as burnout (Safipouriyani et al., 2016). Its amount depends on couples' compatibility level and beliefs (Nazri, Zade, & Nazarboland, 2017). The consequence of the lack of expressing emotions is the intensification of unpleasant thoughts and negative arousal in people, and this is known as one of the most important factors of marital conflicts. These spontaneous negative thoughts ultimately strengthen the cycle of increasing dissatisfaction with marriage, the feeling of marital exhaustion and boredom (Falahati & Mohammadi, 2020). Marital burnout shows its symptoms

with a feeling of chronic fatigue, decreased energy, fatigue, weakness, and a wide variety of physical and psychosomatic complaints (Nazarpour et al., 2019).

In this regard, some people are unable to identify their feelings. Sifneos (1973) was the first to call it *alexithymia*, which literally means having no words for feelings. Since then, researchers have used other related terms such as emotional perception, awareness, clarity, and mood label (Sifneos, 2000). Alexithymia is a disorder in emotional and cognitive actions, along with the inability to transform the emotional arousal of experiences into feelings and imaginations that are symbols and signs of emotions. Among the characteristics of alexithymia, we can mention the continuous presence of physical signs instead of emotions, speech and objective thoughts related to external events, as well as the poverty and limitation of imaginative life (Sifneos, 2000). People with alexithymia face difficulties in recognizing, revealing, processing and regulating emotions. Alexithymia is generally considered as a defect in emotional self-regulation (Taylor & Bagby, 2000). Alexithymia is known with features such as inability to recognize and verbally describe personal emotions; A severe poverty of symbolic thinking that limits the disclosure of feedback, emotion, desire, and drives; Inability to use feelings as emotional symptom problems, self-interested thinking about unimportant external realities; reduced recall of dreams; Difficulty distinguishing between emotional states and physical sensations; dry and formal look; lack of facial emotional expression and limited capacity for empathy and self-awareness (Humphreys, Wood, & Parker, 2009). People with this trait have problems in understanding the emotional states of others and show limited empathy in interpersonal relationships (Taylor & Bagby, 2000, 2004). The expression of emotions is the main factor in differentiating satisfied couples from unhappy ones, because it plays an important role in developing intimacy (Tajdin et al., 2021). The mutual expression of the couple's emotions creates a feeling of support and leads to more self-disclosure in the relationship (Sanderson & Evans, 2001). It is also necessary to emphasize that people with alexithymia are not completely unaware of their feelings or completely unable to verbalize them, although for them, emotions are often poorly differentiated and therefore have problems recognizing or verbalizing them (Taylor & Bagby, 2004).

So far, many approaches have been used in the field of couple therapy. One of these approaches is *acceptance and commitment therapy* (ACT). The underlying assumption of acceptance and commitment therapy is that verbal processes

produce a limited set of responses to situations (Hayes, 2004). In general, the goal of acceptance and commitment therapy is moving from psychological inflexibility to psychological flexibility. The goal of ACT is not to reduce symptoms but to increase psychological and behavioral flexibility in areas where behavior is restricted (Herbert & Forman, 2011). *Reality therapy* (RT) is also a practical therapy based on the belief that if people consider their thoughts as a voluntary function, they have experienced selective control of thoughts, leading to control of emotions and behavior. The ability to reduce academic burnout by developing a treatment package that combines the basic concepts of RT and ACT. Among the psychological treatments proposed recently in the field of mental disorders is the ACT. This method is part of the third wave of behavioral therapies and emerged after cognitive-behavioral therapy. Obviously, this approach accepts changing the function of thoughts and feelings instead of changing their form, content, or frequency (Afshari, Khayatan, & Yousefi, 2022). According to the mentioned materials, it can be said that marital burnout and emotional alexithymia are among the important variables in the study of marital relationships that affect different aspects of the relationship. Also, few studies have been done to explain the effectiveness of *realistic acceptance and commitment therapy* (RACT) (Afshari, Khayatan, & Yousefi, 2022; Sepas, Shaker Dioulag, & Khademi, 2022), and this shows the importance and necessity of more research in this field and on various variables. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of RACT on marital burnout and alexithymia in couples.

2. Methods

2.1. Study design and Participant

The current research study is a quasi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design including a control group and a two-month follow-up design. The statistical population included all couples referred to family counseling and couple therapy centers in Tehran's 5th district in 2021. The sample size was selected based on Cochran's formula. Thirty people were selected by the available sampling method. The subjects of both groups completed the questionnaires at the beginning of the research, and then the experimental group underwent RACT, while the control group did not receive any intervention. After the end of the interventions, both groups completed the questionnaires again.

2.2. Measurements

In order to collect data, *Couple's Burnout Measure* (CBM) (1996) and *Toronto Alexithymia Scale* (TAS-20) were used.

2.2.1. Marital Burnout

Couple's Burnout Measure (CBM) is a self-assessment tool designed to measure the degree of marital dissatisfaction among couples. Pines invented CBM in 1996. This questionnaire has 21 items that include three main components: physical fatigue (for example, feeling tired, weak and having sleep disorders); emotional collapse (feeling depressed, hopeless, trapped); Psychological collapse (such as feelings of worthlessness, frustration and anger towards the spouse). All these items are answered on a seven-point scale. A 7-point Likert scale (1=never to 7=always) is used to score the questionnaire materials. The evaluation of CBM reliability coefficient showed that it has an internal similarity between the variables in the range of 0.84 and 0.90. Negative correlations have confirmed the validity of CBM with positive communication characteristics: positive opinion about communication, conversation quality, sense of security, self-fulfillment, a sense of purpose, appeal and emotional attraction towards the spouse and the quality of their sexual relationship. (Pines, 2002; Pines & Nunes, 2003). Navidi (2005) implemented CBM on a sample of 240 people in order to calculate reliability. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha is 0.86. The validity (CBM) of this test was correlated with the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, the correlation coefficient between these two questionnaires was -0.40, which is significant at the $P < 0.001$ level (Navidi, 2005).

2.2.2. Alexithymia

The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994) is a 20-item test. It has three subscales measuring difficulty in identifying emotions, difficulty in describing emotions and objective thinking. Items are scored based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Questions 19, 17, 11, 8, 5, 3, 1 determine difficulty in identifying emotions, questions 2, 20, 16, 9, 6, difficulty in describing emotions and the rest determine objective thinking. A total score is also calculated from the sum of the scores of three subscales for general alexithymia. Numerous studies have investigated and

confirmed the psychometric properties of TAS-20 (Taylor & Bagby, 2000). In the Farsi version of TAS-20, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for total alexithymia, and three subscales of difficulty in identifying emotions, difficulty in describing emotions, and objective thinking are respectively 0.85, 0.82, 0.75, and 0.72 showing the good internal consistency of the scale. The retest reliability of the Toronto-20 alexithymia scale in a sample of 67 people was confirmed from 0.80 to 0.87 for the total alexithymia and different subscales in a sample of 67 people on two occasions with an interval of four weeks (Besharat, 2007). The concurrent validity, of the TAS-20 was investigated and confirmed by Besharat (2007). The confirmatory factor analysis results also confirmed the existence of three factors: difficulty in identifying emotions,

difficulty in describing emotions, and objective thinking in the Farsi version of TAS-20 (Besharat, 2007).

2.3. Intervention

In the experimental group, a group intervention based on RACT was implemented based on the package conducted by Afshari et al. (2022) Afshari, Khayatan and Yousefi (2022).

2.3.1. RACT

In the present study, a ten-session program of group academic counseling was held based on the package conducted by Afshari, Khayatan & Yousefi (2022) Afshari, Khayatan and Yousefi (2022). The content of the sessions is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Brief description of RACT sessions

Session	Content
1	Group familiarization, management of disturbing cognitions, assessment of factors affecting marital burnout and emotional alexithymia, introduction of sources of motivation for couples' thoughts, increasing internal control instead of external control through the introduction of RT principles, conscious breathing practice, providing homework
2	Treatment of mental problems caused by marital burnout and emotional alexithymia, review of the assignment of the last session, introduction of different types of thinking, familiarization with the concept of fusion, defusion through the metaphor of palm on the face and practice of looking at fusion from 6 angles, taking the wrist of the mind and labeling to thoughts, writing down thoughts, seeing thoughts as independent entities and normalizing thoughts and validating thoughts, practice letting them pass, providing homework
3	Effective thought management in creating marital burnout and alexithymia, examining the perceived source of control, challenging self-blaming and self-comparing thoughts, separating with gratitude, evaluating the general orientation (D) of participants in the WDEP system, providing homework
4	Improvement of negative emotions, review of the assignment of the last session, creative despair to show fruitless effort to get rid of unpleasant emotions, acceptance and lack of control of unpleasant emotions through the metaphor of war with the monster, breaking away from unpleasant thoughts and feelings through the metaphor of a rebellious horse. Identifying needs and their role in regulating emotions, providing homework
5	Correcting the emotions that hinder a satisfactory marital relationship, examining the task of the last meeting, the metaphor of the 40th birthday party in order to clarify the values, examining how to act according to the values using visual exposure and feedback in a stressful situation in order to increase internal control. Practice accepting the conscious mind in order to reduce stress (accepting bodily sensations, naming feelings, paying attention to thoughts and behavioral tendencies, practicing surfing on emotions, presenting homework
6	Modifying the behaviors that facilitate marital burnout and alexithymia, reviewing the assignment of the last session, being aware of behaviors incompatible with a satisfactory marital relationship, creating internal control instead of external control over behavior, creating positive addiction in order to improve marital burnout and marital alexithymia. The metaphor of the sky, weather and air in order to get to know the observer and himself as a context for behavioral evaluation, presenting homework
7	Correcting facilitating behaviors, reviewing the assignment of the last session, metaphor of the chess board in order to externally monitor what they do in life, training wild dogs in the path of life, fighting procrastination to do postponed tasks in order to improve marital burnout and emotional alexithymia. Performing committed actions through the correct way of planning, getting to know about setting goals in the marital relationship, presenting homework
8	Physical activation to reduce marital burnout and emotional alexithymia, reviewing the assignment of the last session, identifying more with the need for survival, getting to know the ideal world in the field of physical needs, getting to know the WDEP method in order to improve communication with the body. The technique of restraining wild dogs on the way to physical goals, providing homework
9	Improving interpersonal relationships, examining the assignment of the last meeting, examining the importance of the need to belong and love, the metaphor of the death notice to identify values, increasing awareness about interpersonal relationships with the help of de-fusion of false beliefs in communication. Increasing internal control with the help of committed practice of the skill of saying no, introducing destructive and constructive communication habits, providing homework
10	Summarizing and reviewing techniques and techniques of the previous session, ending the intervention of acceptance and realistic commitment, providing final recommendations, performing the post-test.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data was analysed in two descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential parts. In the descriptive part, frequency distribution tables were used, and in the inferential part of data analysis, mixed variance analysis with repeated measurements and Bonferroni's post hoc test; SPSS software version 26 were used.

3. Findings and Results

In terms of demographic data, the mean and standard deviation of the age of the participants in the experimental group was 29.90 (3.11) and in the control group was 31.34 (4.67) years. Also, in the experimental group, there were 4 couples with children (26.67 percent) and 6 couples without children (73.33 percent). In the control group, 6 couples (40%) had children and 9 couples (60%) did not have a child. The Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics indexes of the collected research data.

Table 2

Descriptive findings of experimental and control groups

Variable	Group	Stage	Mean	Standard deviation
Marital burnout	Control	Pre-test	94.29	7.01
		Post-test	96.20	7.25
		Follow-up	95.11	6.99
	Experimental	Pre-test	92.19	6.52
		Post-test	74.31	7.12
		Follow-up	73.87	7.30
Alexithymia	Control	Pre-test	57.32	5.76
		Post-test	55.91	5.53
		Follow-up	56.19	5.29
	Experimental	Pre-test	59.88	5.61
		Post-test	46.61	5.70
		Follow-up	45.03	5.18

Based on the contents of the Table 2, the scores of the research variables in the control group did not change significantly. However, the average of both variables in the experimental group increased. To test the significance of the effectiveness of the RACT on the experimental group, multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measurements was used in three stages. For this purpose, the required prerequisites must be checked first.

Table 3

Results of normal distribution of scores and homogeneity of variances test

Variable	Group	Shapiro-wilk	Levene		Mauchly		
		Df	Statistics	Df ²	Statistics	X ²	W
Marital burnout	Experimental	15	0.85	28	0.71	9.41	0.66
	Control	15	0.82				
Alexithymia	Experimental	15	0.89	28	0.78	22/5	0.72
	Control	15	0.80				

According to the Table 3, the Shapiro-Wilk test shows the normality of the data. Based on the results of Levene's test, the condition of homogeneity of variance is established, and Mauchly's test also confirms the condition of data sphericity

at a significance level of 0.01 (P = 0.000). Therefore, it is allowed to use the method of multivariate variance analysis with three-step repeated measurements.

Table 4

The results of within-group effects

Variable	Change source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig.	Effect size
Marital burnout	Intercept	87572.13	1	87572.13	406.65	0.000	0.73
	Group	1697.44	1	1697.44	5.33	0.000	0.52
	Error	5983.33	1	5983.33			
Alexithymia	Intercept	65721.85	1	65721.85	361.87	0.000	0.70
	Group	1032.57	1	1032.57	4.98	0.000	0.45
	Error	3988.02	1	236.11			

According to the Table 4, the between-group differences in the average scores of the pre-test, post-test and follow-up of the dependent variables of the research (marital depression and emotional alexithymia) in the two experimental and control groups are expressive of the effect

of the independent variable of the research (RACT). The effect of the intervention on the research variables. The following results of the multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measurements in three stages of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up are shown.

Table 5

The results of analysis of variance with repeated measurements with three steps

Variable	Effect	Test	Value	F	Df	Df error	Sig.	Effect size
Marital burnout	Time	Pillai's Trace	0.73	121.55	2	27	0.000	0.73
		Wilk's Lambda	0.69	121.55	2	27	0.000	0.73
		Hotelling's Trace	10.22	121.55	2	27	0.000	0.73
		Roy's largest root	10.22	121.55	2	27	0.000	0.73
	Time*Group	Pillai's Trace	0.75	99.13	2	27	0.000	0.75
		Wilk's Lambda	0.74	99.13	2	27	0.000	0.75
		Hotelling's Trace	10.10	99.13	2	27	0.000	0.75
		Roy's largest root	10.10	99.13	2	27	0.000	0.75
Alexithymia	Time	Pillai's Trace	0.70	130.06	2	27	0.000	0.70
		Wilk's Lambda	0.66	130.06	2	27	0.000	0.70
		Hotelling's Trace	11.20	130.06	2	27	0.000	0.70
		Roy's largest root	11.20	130.06	2	27	0.000	0.70
	Time*Group	Pillai's Trace	0.71	125.49	2	27	0.000	0.71
		Wilk's Lambda	0.67	125.49	2	27	0.000	0.71
		Hotelling's Trace	10.87	125.49	2	27	0.000	0.71
		Roy's largest root	10.87	125.49	2	27	0.000	0.71

Based on the findings in the Table 5, the significance level shows that RACT has had a significant effect on the research variables, and the changes made as a result of it are

significant in the three time periods of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up.

Table 6

Bonferroni post-hoc test results in three stages by groups

Variable	Post-test – Follow-up			Pre-test – Follow-up			Pre-test – Post-test		
	Mean dif.	Std deviation error	Sig.	Mean dif.	Std deviation error	Sig.	Mean dif.	Std deviation error	Sig.
Marital burnout	18.41	0.23	0.80	0.53	0.25	0.00	17.88	0.56	0.00
Alexithymia	1.21	0.44	0.49	14.58	0.31	0.00	13.27	0.13	0.00

The [Table 6](#) shows that the difference between the mean scores of the follow-up and post-test stages is insignificant, while the scores of both stages are significantly different from those of the pre-test stage. Therefore, the effect of RACT on the experimental group was stable in the follow-up phase.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the effectiveness of RACT on marital burnout and alexithymia in couples. The results of the data analysis showed that this approach has a significant effect on marital burnout and alexithymia in couples, and this effect was also stable in the follow-up phase. In explaining the effect of RACT on marital dissatisfaction, we can refer to the studies of [Amini and Karami Nejad \(2021\)](#), [Asadpour and Veisi \(2019\)](#), [Amidisimakani, Najarpourian and Samavi \(2018\)](#), and [Sadeghi, Naeimeh and Alivandvafa \(2021\)](#). They showed that ACT effectively affects marital burnout. We can also mention [Goudarzi et al. \(2020\)](#) that showed RT can reduce marital burnout. Besides, Marital dissatisfaction is a mismatch between the current situation and the expected situation. Reality-oriented RACT techniques help couples design behaviors that reduce conflict and strengthen the essence of marriage through review, judgment, and replacements. Also, accepting responsibility for their choices to reduce the feeling of despair and frustration by reducing the gap between what they expect and reality. As a result, the lack of desire, apathy, and, finally, marital burnout will be reduced ([Rezvani Abdolabad & Manzari Tavakoli, 2021](#)). In addition, ACT techniques can teach couples to remain committed to their values and to engage in effective behavior instead of fusing with their thoughts and engaging in ineffective behaviors. Also, accepting the unchangeable aspects of life, being committed to values, and performing effective behaviors can lead to an increase in empathy and a better understanding of the needs and desires of the spouse by promoting psychological flexibility and creating a better fit between reality and expectations through cognitive dissonance and reducing marital dissatisfaction. ([Amini & Karami Nejad, 2021](#)). In further explaining the effectiveness of this approach on marital heartbreak, the ACT encourages couples to connect with the real values of their lives and be attracted to them. This treatment helps them imagine a more rewarding life despite unpleasant thoughts and feelings, and this way of thinking reduces marital burnout ([Asadpour & Veisi, 2019](#)). In fact, the purpose of the techniques based on

acceptance and commitment in this therapy is to help people to determine their values in the relationship and, therefore, to be less exhausted or bored with the emotional fluctuations that happen to them in life ([Sadeghi, Naeimeh, & Alivandvafa, 2021](#)). In this approach, techniques related to inner experiences, mindfulness, acceptance and contact with the present can help people establish a good, ambivalent and efficient marital relationship for their growth and prosperity. Moreover, reduce the creation or continuation of destructive and negative emotions during the marital relationship and, as a result, reduce marital burnout ([Amidisimakani, Najarpourian, & Samavi, 2018](#)). In addition, RT techniques in RACT help couples become aware of the existence of five basic needs in themselves and their spouses and discuss how to fulfill them, which leads to a better understanding of each other. Also, couples are informed about the intensity and weakness and how to fulfill them and they try to provide the context to fulfill these needs for themselves and their spouses, which can ultimately lead to the reduction of marital dissatisfaction in couples ([Goudarzi et al., 2020](#)).

In explaining the effect of RACT on alexithymia, we can refer to the studies of [Sadeghi, Naeimeh and Alivandvafa \(2021\)](#), [Hasan Larijani, Hossein Sabet and Borjali \(2020\)](#), [Baseri and Bozorgi \(2017\)](#), [Araghi et al. \(2020\)](#). They showed the effectiveness of ACT on alexithymia. Moreover, [Tajdin et al. \(2021\)](#) showed the effectiveness of RT on alexithymia. The RACT approach, by providing the technique of acceptance or the willingness to experience coping with difficulty or other disturbing events without trying to restrain them, causes more understanding about standing against life challenges and people believe that they have the ability to cope with the challenges of personal, family and social life. Also, this treatment helps to control oneself through the techniques related to ACT by helping to control inappropriate thoughts and behaviors so that the person can do voluntary actions. It can lead to a person consciously controlling and managing his thoughts and emotions. As a result, the person can experience his emotions as they are and finally alexithymia is reduced ([Sadeghi, Moheb & Alivandvafa, 2021](#)). In the techniques based on acceptance and commitment of RACT therapy, clients are taught that internal events when experienced are not inherently harmful to human health and their harmfulness comes from considering them as harmful and unhealthy experiences and seeking to control and eliminate them. Bagby et al (1994) believe that people with alexithymia cannot talk about their feelings and have problems experiencing their inner states ([Bagby, Parker, &](#)

Taylor, 1994). Based on a communicative framework of therapy based on acceptance and commitment, language or gustatory behavior is considered an active behavior. Therefore, the content of language and cognition and thinking through learning are conceptualized almost conventionally, and people believe in what they say and consider it to be true. This process causes inflexibility and inefficiency of behavior and will cause a person to avoid the experience. Acceptance-based techniques help people experientially face these destructive effects of controlling thoughts and emotions and see thoughts as just thoughts and feelings as just feelings and not reality. It effectively reduces alexithymia (Hasan Larijani, Hossein Sabet, & Borjali, 2020). By teaching techniques based on acceptance and commitment in RACT, people realize their abilities in the field of identifying and describing emotions and their motivation to properly express emotions increases. Therefore, people who can recognize their feelings and emotions and express their emotional states more effectively can better face life's problems and be more successful in adapting to the environment and others. The emotional awareness that emerges from the techniques based on acceptance and commitment of this treatment gives couples more control over their emotions and regulates them (Asadpour & Veisi, 2019) and as a result, couples' alexithymia decreases. Also, realistic techniques in this approach teach couples that although past experiences affect a person's current behavior and feelings, they do not determine the current situation. Instead, the degree of responsibility, recognition, and respect for the existing reality and how one chooses to satisfy the needs determine the individual's current feelings and behavior. What he feels today is the result of his choices and what he experiences tomorrow is due to our actions, behavior, and ways of fulfilling our needs. Since alexithymia is also a disorder resulting from a high volume of negative emotions (Tajdin et al., 2021), RACT techniques can reduce alexithymia in couples by including the techniques of both ACT and RT approaches. The RT techniques in RACT allow the couple to take the focus off the behavior that is out of their control. It also focuses on controllable aspects, thereby reducing

negative and dysfunctional emotions through positive internal dialogue (Tajdin et al., 2021), and, subsequently, alexithymia.

5. Limitations

Every research has limitations and the current research is not exempt from this rule and has limitations as follows: limitation in not controlling some variables affecting the results of the research; The results cannot be changed to another time and place; random sampling method available; Considering the questionnaire as an information gathering tool. Therefore, caution should be observed in generalizing the present study's findings.

6. Suggestions and Applications

According to the results of this research and the review of the literature, it seems that the RACT approach can be effective on marital burnout and alexithymia by combining the techniques and concepts of two approaches based on acceptance and commitment and RT. Considering the limitations and the lack of research to explain the effectiveness of the RACT approach, researchers in this field are suggested to conduct research by considering different variables and different statistical communities. Also, according to the results obtained from the present research, it is suggested that couple therapists and family counselors use the techniques of this approach.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics principles

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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