



The Impact of Life Skills Training on Self-Efficacy and Marital Satisfaction among Women Attending a Community Center

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Marriage and marital satisfaction constitute a significant area of human life that requires adaptation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of life skills training on self-efficacy and marital satisfaction among women attending a community center in Sari.

Methods and Materials: This was a quasi-experimental study utilizing a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The population consisted of all women attending the community center in Sari in the year 2023. A total of 40 individuals (20 in the experimental group and 20 in the control group) were selected through non-random voluntary sampling and randomly assigned to the two groups. To collect data, three standardized questionnaires were used: the Olson et al. (1990) Marital Satisfaction Scale, and the General Self-Efficacy Scale by Sherer et al. (1982). The life skills training program was conducted over 10 sessions for the experimental group, while the control group received no training or intervention during this period. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted for both groups, and data analysis was performed using univariate analysis of variance with the SPSS-16 software.

Findings: Data analysis revealed that life skills training significantly improved self-efficacy ($p < .01$) and marital satisfaction ($p < .01$) among the women.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that life skills training is a suitable strategy for enhancing marital satisfaction and self-efficacy among women, and can be effectively used as a method to increase these outcomes in women.

Keywords: Life skills, Self-efficacy, Marital satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Marriage and marital satisfaction form a significant aspect of human life that requires adaptation. Marital satisfaction is a state in which both spouses feel happy and content with their marriage and being together

(Bagarozzi, 2014; Parsakia, Farzad, & Rostami, 2023). A satisfying marriage creates a conducive environment for the exchange and sharing of positive feelings and emotions. Therefore, the ability to understand and accept each other's thoughts, feelings, and emotions in marital life is associated with greater satisfaction (Fitness, 2001). If couples do not

experience sufficient marital satisfaction, they may face numerous marital conflicts and problems. Statistics indicate that about two-thirds of first marriages end in separation or divorce due to marital dissatisfaction and related issues (Saadati & Parsakia, 2023).

Self-efficacy could be one of the variables that potentially influences marital satisfaction. Self-efficacy is considered a cognitive process where individuals learn new behaviors through environmental and social influences, which affect their ability to improve future events (Bandura, 2018). High levels of self-efficacy among couples are associated with satisfaction and adaptation in marriage and lower levels of psychological distress, whereas low self-efficacy is considered a risk factor for dissatisfaction and maladjustment in marriage, negative parenting, and adverse parent-child relationships (An et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2021; Parsakia et al., 2024; Parsakia, Rostami, & Saadati, 2023).

Given the role of marital satisfaction and its influencing factors such as self-efficacy in the stability and continuity of conjugal life, focusing on methods to improve these components can prevent harms caused by marital dissatisfaction, such as conflicts and separation. Among the methods that could play a potential role in enhancing marital satisfaction and related components, which have received less attention from researchers and authorities, is life skills training. Life skills training is an activity aimed at improving individual abilities in decision-making and problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, self-awareness and empathy, and coping with emotions and stress (Emadian & Hosseini Tabaghdehi, 2023; Esmaeili & Ezatinia 2019). Life skills training can also enhance the capabilities of adolescents and adults (Esmaeili & Ezatinia 2019; Mohammadi Vand et al., 2021). It provides an opportunity for individuals to gain new, realistic, and positive perspectives on the future by increasing their knowledge, abilities, self-awareness, beliefs, and motivation (Arsandaux et al., 2020).

As previously mentioned, low marital satisfaction can cause irreparable damage to family stability and durability. Therefore, marital satisfaction and its effective components should be enhanced through therapies and group trainings. Low marital satisfaction can be improved through life skills training (Mohammadi Vand et al., 2021). Furthermore, life skills training can increase self-efficacy (Esmaeili & Ezatinia 2019). It is effective in helping individuals improve communication, cognition, skill training, and efficient living. Life skills training has a positive impact on problem-solving, effective communication (Brunelle et al., 2007), and

adapting to stress (Deckro et al., 2002). Therefore, based on research conducted by the researcher of this study, no research, either domestically or internationally, has simultaneously examined the effectiveness of life skills training on self-efficacy and marital satisfaction among married women. Thus, this study seeks to answer whether life skills training is effective in enhancing self-efficacy and marital satisfaction among women visiting a community center in Sari.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study is an applied research utilizing a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test assessments involving two groups (one experimental group and one control group). The study population comprised all married women aged 25 to 45 who visited a community center in Sari during the third quarter of 2023. The sample consisted of married women aged 25 to 45 who visited the community center in Sari during the third quarter of 2023, meeting specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each group included 20 participants, comprising an experimental group that received training and a control group that did not receive any training, followed by the administration of the tests. Inclusion criteria for the study encompassed women visiting the Sari community center, aged between 25 to 45 years, based on medical and psychiatric evaluation, free from symptoms of psychiatric disorders or any physical illness that could hinder participation in the workshop. Exclusion criteria included severe psychiatric disorders, severe physical illnesses, absence from more than two sessions, and non-cooperation.

Ethical considerations in this research ensured that participation was entirely voluntary. Prior to starting the project, participants were familiarized with the details of the plan and its regulations. Individual beliefs and opinions were respected. Members of both the experimental and control groups were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage. Additionally, members of the control group could opt to receive the same intervention as the experimental group in similar therapeutic sessions after the project's conclusion. All documents, questionnaires, and confidential records were exclusively accessed by the researchers. Informed written consent was obtained from all volunteers. From these, 40 eligible volunteer women were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control groups, with the

experimental group receiving 10 sessions of life skills training.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Marital Satisfaction

This scale was developed by Olson et al. (1990) to assess the degree of satisfaction couples feel regarding their marital life. The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (1990) is available in two versions: a long form with 115 items and a short form with 47 items; the long 115-item form was used in this thesis. Couples respond to each item on a 5-point Likert scale from 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree. This scale encompasses 12 dimensions including contractual agreement, marital satisfaction, personality issues, marital communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relations, marriage and parenting, relatives and friends, power distribution roles, and ideological orientation. The internal consistency coefficient for the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale (1990) was estimated at 0.74. The overall reliability of the scale in the study by Nasiri et al. (2022) through Cronbach's alpha was 0.87 (Nasiri et al., 2022).

2.2.2. Self-Efficacy

The General Self-Efficacy Scale was designed by Sherer et al. in 1982. This questionnaire consists of 17 items, with items number 15, 13, 9, 8, 3 scored from left to right and the rest from right to left, where a higher score indicates greater self-efficacy. This scale includes three subscales: the tendency to initiate behavior (items 1, 4, 14, 15), the tendency to extend effort to complete a task (items 3, 5, 8, 9, 13), and resistance in the face of obstacles (items 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17). Sherer did not specify the factors and phrases but believed this scale measures three aspects of behavior. The scale or measurement level is Likert-type, with scoring as follows: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. The validity coefficient of the scale using the split-half method by Guttman was 0.76 and by Cronbach's alpha was 0.79. Najafi (2013) also randomly selected 30 participants, administered the self-efficacy test to them, and achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, and similarly by Spearman-Brown method, 83 percent was obtained. In the research by Ganji & Farahani (2016), a reliability coefficient of 81 percent was obtained through Cronbach's alpha (Dirmanchi & Khanjani 2019).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Life Skills Training

The intervention protocol of this study consists of a series of 10 sessions focused on life skills training, specifically tailored for women between the ages of 25 to 45. Each session addresses a different life skill crucial for improving marital satisfaction and self-efficacy. The goal is to enhance participants' interpersonal communication, self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, stress management, creative thinking, critical thinking, self-esteem, assertiveness, and empathy. The sessions are structured to facilitate the learning and practical application of these skills in daily life, with the final session dedicated to testing and reinforcing the skills acquired throughout the program (Abu Warda, 2020; Azari et al., 2022; Emadian & Hosseini Tabaghdehi, 2023; Esmaeili & Ezatinia 2019; Mohammadi Vand et al., 2021; Sarmadi Soltan et al., 2013; Yoosefi, 2021).

Session 1: Effective Communication and Interpersonal Relationship Skills

The first session serves as an introduction where participants get acquainted with each other and the group rules are established. This session introduces life skills and their importance, defines marital satisfaction, social desirability, and self-efficacy. Participants learn about the key elements of effective communication, including active listening and methods to enhance listening skills. The ability to communicate helps improve verbal and non-verbal interactions, overcome shyness, express opinions effectively, resist inappropriate requests, recognize boundaries in relationships, maintain desirable friendships, and manage the beginning and end of interactions more effectively.

Session 2: Self-awareness Skills

The second session focuses on self-awareness skills. Participants explore their emotions, identity, and self-discovery. This involves recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses, desires, fears, and inclinations. This awareness aids in forming a realistic self-image and better understanding of one's rights and responsibilities.

Session 3: Emotional Regulation Skills

In the third session, the training covers emotional regulation with a focus on defining anger, recognizing situations that induce anger, and practical methods for anger management. This skill encompasses the ability to identify one's own emotions and those of others, as well as understanding how emotions influence behavior. It helps

participants respond appropriately in situations of frustration, anger, depression, and anxiety.

Session 4: Problem-solving and Decision-making Skills

The fourth session aims to develop problem-solving skills that help resolve life's challenges effectively. Unresolved issues can lead to stress and threaten mental and physical health. Decision-making skills are also covered, helping participants make informed choices by considering various options and their potential positive and negative outcomes. Proper decision-making enhances mental health.

Session 5: Managing Stress

This session defines stress, its types, effects, and teaches about the factors that cause stress. Recognizing different stresses in life and their impact on behavior allows participants to identify sources of stress and follow correct methods to reduce stress.

Session 6: Creative Thinking Skills

Session six activates participants' minds around the concept of creative thinking. It familiarizes them with the components of creative thinking and enhances their skills in this area.

Session 7: Critical Thinking Skills

The seventh session delves into critical thinking skills and principles. This ability helps analyze information and experiences received, resist imposed values and pressures, and recognize that not all behaviors by others are correct. Using these skills, decisions are made more appropriately, and problems are solved more practically.

Session 8: Confidence and Self-esteem

In the eighth session, the focus is on self-esteem, which involves how individuals think about themselves, guiding their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Self-esteem is an internal feeling and determines how individuals interact with the world and others. Confidence, on the other hand, refers

to trusting oneself in specific areas of life, overcoming challenges, and achieving goals.

Session 9: Assertiveness

The ninth session covers assertiveness, enabling participants to express themselves without upsetting others or themselves. Although all people occasionally react aggressively or passively, such responses stem from a lack of confidence and are inappropriate ways to interact with others.

Session 10: Empathy and Post-testing Review

The final session defines empathy—the ability to understand the lives of others, even when not in similar situations. Empathy helps accept and respect others who are different from us. Those with greater empathy show more interest in others, are more tolerant, less aggressive, and more likable. This skill improves social relationships. The session concludes with post-testing to evaluate the skills learned throughout the sessions and reviews the entire program.

2.4. Data Analysis

In the descriptive statistics section, mean and standard deviation were used, and in the inferential statistics section, tests of homogeneity of variances (Levene's test) and comparison of means (ANOVA) were performed using SPSS software.

3. Findings and Results

The number of respondents in the age range of 30 to 40 years included 21 individuals (52.5%), respondents under 30 years old numbered 12 (30%), and respondents over 40 years old numbered 7 (9.33%).

Table 1

Mean (Standard Deviation) of Self-Efficacy and Marital Satisfaction Variables

Variable	Group	Stage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Efficacy	Experimental	Pre-test	4.750	6.05
		Post-test	5.930	11.14
	Control	Pre-test	4.620	6.52
		Post-test	4.740	5.86
Marital Satisfaction	Experimental	Pre-test	3.333	23.46
		Post-test	4.439	27.76
	Control	Pre-test	3.336	15.76
		Post-test	3.331	18.09

To examine the significance of the differences between the self-efficacy and marital satisfaction scores in the

experimental and control groups, repeated measures analysis of variance was used. The results of the Kolmogorov-

Smirnov test confirmed the normality of the data for the study variables. The test of homogeneity of variance (Levene's test) indicated equality of variances for the study variables across the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages in both groups. Additionally, the results of the Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated the non-sphericity of the covariance matrix between groups, necessitating the use of the Greenhouse-Geisser conservative test. Examination of the assumptions showed that all assumptions were met in

this study. The results of the multivariate repeated measures analysis of variance among the study groups for the variables of self-efficacy and marital satisfaction indicated a significant between-subjects effect (group), meaning that at least one of the groups differed from the others in at least one of the variables of self-efficacy and marital satisfaction. The within-subjects effect (time) for the study variables was also significant, indicating that there was at least one mean change over time from pre-test to post-test.

Table 2

Results of Analysis of Variance

Effect Type	Variable	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Statistic	Significance
Between Groups	Self-Efficacy	1	1416.100	1416.100	17.872	.001
Within Groups		38	3011.000	79.237		
Total		39	4427.100			
Between Groups	Marital Satisfaction	1	1124.100	1124.100	211.98	.000
Within Groups		38	2089.900	549.208		
Total		39	3794.000			

The results in [Table 2](#) demonstrate that self-efficacy and marital satisfaction in the experimental group were higher at the post-test compared to the pre-test ($p < .01$). This finding indicates that life skills training was effective in improving self-efficacy and marital satisfaction among women visiting a community center in Sari.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this research was to examine the impact of life skills training on self-efficacy and marital satisfaction among women visiting a community center in Sari. The results indicated that life skills training effectively enhances self-efficacy among these women. To compare the levels of self-efficacy in the control and experimental groups of women visiting the community center in Sari, a univariate analysis of variance was used. These findings are consistent with previous research ([Abu Warda, 2020](#); [Azari et al., 2022](#); [Emadian & Hosseini Tabaghdehi, 2023](#); [Esmaeili & Ezatinia 2019](#); [Muhammadi Vand et al., 2021](#); [Sarmadi Soltan et al., 2013](#); [Yoosefi, 2021](#)).

In explaining the effectiveness of life skills training on self-efficacy, it can be noted that life skills training enables individuals to gain a better understanding of themselves and their surroundings, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, become aware of their capabilities and limitations, accept realities more readily, and adjust more appropriately. Furthermore, the group training method itself can have a positive impact. Feeling that others share similar

problems helps individuals accept realities and cope better, which initially boosts self-esteem and self-concept and ultimately enhances women's self-efficacy. Life skills training helps individuals to recognize, evaluate, and understand their emotions and feelings, discern logical and illogical thoughts associated with them, and ultimately realize which thoughts and emotions are guiding their effective and ineffective behaviors ([Muhammadi Vand et al., 2021](#)). When participants realize that their perceptions largely influence their positive and negative emotions and feelings, the learned life skills allow them to control these emotions, thereby preventing the occurrence of negative psychological traits such as stress and anxiety and promoting positive psychological traits such as happiness and hope. Consequently, life skills training, through the principles and skills it teaches, improves women's self-efficacy.

Regarding the effectiveness of life skills on marital satisfaction, it can be said that by teaching effective communication, life skills training helps improve women's interactions with their spouses. Training in various methods of self-awareness, problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and assertive behavior improved the quality of relationships between women and their spouses. Life skills comprise a set of abilities that enhance adaptability and promote positive and effective behavior; thus, an individual can accept social and personal responsibilities without harming themselves or others and effectively face daily life challenges and problems ([Muhammadi Vand et al., 2021](#); [Yoosefi, 2021](#)).

Researchers have confirmed the positive impact of life skills in utilizing intellectual and cognitive capabilities, preventing violent behaviors, increasing self-reliance, and boosting self-confidence. Life skills enhance an individual's adaptability, allowing them to better fulfill their social and personal responsibilities, express their capabilities, and protect themselves from harms arising from the inability to solve problems. Life skills are abilities that help an individual behave wisely and correctly in various situations; they facilitate harmonious relationships with oneself and others and resolve issues without resorting to violence while achieving success and feeling happiness in life (Yoosefi, 2021). Life skills, through training and experience, are usable; they also constitute a process that brings stability to personality and depth to identity, organizes personal culture, and follows satisfaction and acceptance and success in life. Relying on the findings of this research and referring to previous studies, one can confidently support the usefulness of life skills training in improving women's marital satisfaction.

5. Limitations and Suggestions

The data for this research was collected from a group of women visiting a community center in Sari, thus generalizing and making more accurate comparisons of the results to other groups from different counties is less feasible. The limited population of the study to the community center in Sari requires caution in generalizing the results. Given the time span of this study, which was conducted over a limited period, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions from the research results, and thus it is necessary for research on these themes to be carried out repeatedly and at different times. Due to the lack of similar research, the researcher, despite much effort, cannot find studies that address the research topic. It is suggested that to enhance the level of social desirability in universities and educational centers, courses on basic life skills be conducted. It is recommended that effective educational and therapeutic programs be planned to strengthen women's psychological well-being. To increase the level of marital satisfaction

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among women visiting the community center in Sari, the following strategies are suggested: Efforts should be made to implement training similar to the impact of basic life skills on marital satisfaction by academic and scientific researchers. For better effectiveness of the training, it seems advisable that both spouses be trained simultaneously, and necessary follow-ups after the courses be conducted to determine the feedback from the training and the extent of its effectiveness.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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