

The Effect of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Marital Adjustment of Couples Who Came to Consultancy Centers in Kerman City

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Received: April 17, 2016

Accepted: April 28, 2016

Online Published: May 26, 2016

doi:10.5539/mas.v10n9p36

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/mas.v10n9p36>

Abstract

Current research was done aiming assessment of effect of emotionally focused couple therapy on marital adjustment of couples. Current research was a semi experimental one. Assessed statistical society were couples who came to consultancy centers in Kerman city. A sample including 40 person or 20 couples (20 women and 20 men) were selected randomly and were placed in two control and experiment groups. Experiment group had received required training within 10 session with 60 minutes each one and control group had not received any training. Data gathering tool was Spanier marital adjustment (2007). After conducting of Pretest on both groups, intervention group were treated by emotionally focused treatment within 10 session. Then Posttest was conducted on both groups. Data analysis was done by Covariance analysis method. MANCOVA analysis results showed that effect of emotionally focused couple therapy on marital adjustment was meaningful. Moreover Covariance analysis on each factor of marital adjustment was also an indication of effect of emotionally focused couple therapy on adjustment factors and satisfaction and on consistency factor.

Keywords: emotionally focused couple therapy, marital adjustment

1. Introduction

Emotionally focused couple therapy have been formulated at beginning of 1980 decade (Johnson & Greenberg, 1985; Greenberg & Johnson, 1986) as a response to lack of clear and credible interventions especially more humane and less behavioral interventions. This approach is called emotionally focused treatment as it draws our attention to considerable importance of emotion and emotional relationships in interactional patterns and distinct key business in close relationships. In past, quality and power of emotion for making of changes in couples in couple therapy was not a matter of attention in this extent. It seems that couple therapy range was considered as a type of emotion phobia during the time. Generally, emotion often have been seen simplistically as secondary revelation which is appeared through behavior or cognition and sometimes it also have been considered as a dangerous annoying force in treatment or merely as an insufficient factor for change (Honsly, Shindel, 2010).

Emotionally focused couple therapy combines the techniques of systematic and experimental approaches for expansion of emotional responses and interactional cycles between couples. Also it seems that emotionally focused approach with stress which it has on essential common emotions between humans and their needs could cover cultures and different sections properly. As emotional experiments is main change element in this approach, therapist in treatment sessions stresses on processing of emotions and essential interactional patterns same as situation that do experiment in treatment sessions. Two main targets of emotionally focused treatment: are access to emotional experiments and change of interactional status of couples and also emotionally focused treatment includes: reduction of negative interactional cycles, reconstruction of interactions and strengthening, stabilizing and integrity (Johnson, Honarparvaran, 1391).

During recent years, considerable role of emotion in marital conflict and couple therapy has been accepted increasingly (Gottman, 1994) this is why emotion study has been continued so far (Plutchik, 2000; Tomkins, 1991; Louise & Haviland-Jonse, 2000). Main role of emotional adjustment and emotional contribution in marital conflict and happiness (Johnson & Bradbury, 1999) and emotional nature of humane attachment (Balbi, 1988; 1991;

Johnson, 2003) is clarified more and more. Emotionally focused treatment as an intervention is originated from regular observation of couples in treatment and a process in which couples are succeeded to repair their relationship. New patterns of marital conflicts such as Gottman pattern and patterns of adult's close relationships such as attachment theory are emanated from observations and decoding of special interactions between couples. Hence existence of coordination and correspondence between emotionally focused treatment as an interventional model and researched descriptive patterns regarding conflict and relationship theories such as attachment is not far from imagination. Susan Johnson and Less Greenberg, founders of emotionally focused treatment, have learned description method of change process which is stated in emotionally focused treatment and required interventions for enhancement of this change process. Initial instruction of emotionally focused treatment was originated from results of initial study in which emotionally focused treatment was compared with couples who were not treated and couples who were participated in behavioral relational interventions and training of relational proficiencies (Johnson & Greenberg, 1985). Therapist of emotionally focused treatment is a process oriented consultant who assist couples in reprocessing of experiment especially emotional experiments of relationship. In treatment sessions, therapist is an assistant who sometimes is following and sometimes is leading. Treatment process provides new opportunities for couples for experiment trial of being together methods in order to make them able to make cautioned decisions regarding their desired type of relationship (Kiefer, Sanchez, 2007).

Marital adjustment is a situation in which wife and husband are feeling a sense caused by fortune and mutual satisfaction most of the times. Satisfactory relationships between couples are measurable via mutual affection, level of their care of each other, acceptance and understanding of each other. In fact, marital satisfaction provides a general assessment of current relationship status. One of most common concepts for determination and showing of happiness level and level of relationship's stability is marital satisfaction and adjustment. Marital adjustment is not created automatically and its creation requires couple's effort. Usually, first marriage year is highly unstable adjustment wise and has highest danger for conflict and divorce. Individual's satisfactory adjustment with main social situations of the life has direct relation with level of satisfaction of all essential needs. Needs and their satisfaction specially depend to perception of individuals that changes by age, gender, inherited talents, culture, social section, occupation, geographical location, education & training, experiments and adjustments of other individual's life in individual's surrounding. Marital satisfaction considering importance of family entity in today's societies, its relation with quality of life and its effect on different aspects of life such as physical and psychological health have been came into consideration of scholars from 1990 decade. Sinha & Mukerjec (1990) see marital adjustment as a situation in which wife and husband have sense of fortune and satisfaction from each other most of the times. Adjustment in marriage creates by mutual affection, taking care of each other, acceptance, understanding of each other and satisfaction of needs (Ahmadi, 1384). In fact, marital satisfaction is a process that forms during life of wife and husband and its requirement are attitude's adaptation, cognition of characteristic attributes, creation of behavioral criteria and formation of patterns of interactions (Ghorbanalipour, 1387).

Marital satisfaction is about three factors:

- 1-Satisfaction
- 2-Adjsutment
- 3-Consistency

Effective factors on marital adjustment is vast and complex in some extent and versatile definitions by scholars and researchers in this field help this complexity. Different factors for marital adjustment and conflict are indicated in versatile sources and from researcher's point of view. Here firstly these factors from different perspectives are assessed in summary and in next stage those groups of factors that are indicated in most of the sources will be discussed comprehensively.

Below some of effective factors on marital adjustment that are related to life's condition are stated accompanying by findings and researches that are related to it:

- Economic and social issues
- Relationship with families and relatives
- Principal, faith and religious issues
- Cultural, social and educational factors
- Characteristic attributes
- Commitment and loyalty
- Relational factors

Current research shows that emotionally focused couple therapy effects on marital adjustment of couples.

2. Method

Current research is from semi experimental research's type and from plan types of Pretest-Posttest with control group. Statistical society of this research was couples who came to family consultancy centers in Kerman city in 1394 that their number was 320 couples based on obtained information. Sample group that included 40 individual or 20 couples were selected as random cluster and from 4 consultancy center. Initially, 4 centers were chosen out of consultancy centers randomly and from each center 5 couples were chosen then selected couples were divided into two groups. And randomly one of groups was considered as experiment group with 10 couples or 20 individuals and the other as control group with 10 couples or 20 individuals. 10 couples of experiment group were under treatment interventions but 10 couples of control group did not received any intervention.

2.1 Educational Protocol of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy Approach

This protocol was conducted within 10 session with 60 minutes duration on 40 couples who were selected randomly from 4 consultancy center.

First session

Including general familiarity with couples and introduction of therapist, assessment of their motivation and expectation of attendance in session, offering of definition of emotionally focused couple therapy concepts, marital adjustment, sexual satisfaction, life quality and assessment of individual's point of views regarding these concepts, detection of couple's problematic interactions and assessment of their method to deal with problems, detection of attachment barriers and intra individual and inter individual emotional conflict, evaluation of marital relationship status, sexual satisfaction, life quality, assignment: pay attention into pleasing modes (cheerfulness, joy, lightness, happiness,...) and unpleasing modes (anger, hate, sorrow, jealousy and anxiety)

Second session

Individual session with each couple separately including detection of those information that is impossible at presence of partner such as assessment of level of commitment to marriage, pro marital relationships, preceding personal attachment trauma that is effective on current couple's relation, assessment of level of their fear from revelation of secrets, assignment: pay attention into daily interaction cycle of couples.

Third session

Determining of interaction's patterns including acceptance of couple's sensations if appears, detection of unsafe attachments and fears of each one of couples, help to more opening of relation of therapist with couples by creation of sincerity and higher trust and help to self-revelation of couples, assignment: accurate identification of pure emotion, affections and sensations.

Fourth session

Reconstruction of couple's connection including clarification of key emotional responses, expansion of emotional experiment of each one of couple in relationship and appearance of new elements in experiment, coordination of therapist's view with negative cycle acceptance sources by couples, assessment and revising of relationships, assignment: expression of pure emotions and affections.

Fifth session

Deepening of sensational involvement of couples based on attachment including increase of identification of attachment's requirements, improvement of intra psychological status and improvement of couple's interaction status, assignment: expression of pure emotions and affections.

Sixth session

Expansion of relationship of therapist with couples including determination of proportion and structure of therapist relationship with sources, enhancement of new interaction methods, focus on self not others, identification of basic fears and expression of desires and dreams.

Seventh session

Activation including reconstruction of interactions and change of incidents, more involvement of couples with each other, clarification of desires and dreams of couples, assignment: determination of weak and strength points, practice of relationship

Eighth session

Finding of new solutions for old problems including reconstruction of interactions, change of behavior of harm

maker partner, creation of coordination in internal sense relative to self and also relation, change of interactions, overcoming on barriers and positive reaction, assignment: detection of new solutions for old argumentations and problems.

Ninth session

Use of therapy's achievements in daily life including sincere involvement of couples, staying in therapy's line and not breaking it, coordination of new situations that couple create, identification and support of constructive interactional patterns, creation of safe attachment, creation of a happy story from relation, assignment: implementation of technics in daily environment.

Tenth session

Finishing session including facilitation of session's finishing, pertaining of interactional changes in future, determination of difference between past negative interactional pattern in initial sessions and current, pertaining of emotional involvement in order to strengthen connection between them.

2.2 Reformed Couple'S Adjustment Questionnaire

Main form of this scale is created by Spanier (2007) based on Leevise and Spanier theory regarding marital relationship's quality. Fincham and Bradbury also introduce this questionnaire as appropriate tool for evaluation of marital quality after expressing of their own theory about marital quality. This 14 question questionnaire is created from Spanier main 32 question form and is scored as a range of 6 number from 0 to 5 in a way that fully agree response gets score of 5 and fully negative response gets score of zero. This tool forms from three sub scale including agreement and sympathy, consistency and satisfaction that in summation of scores shows marital quality and high scores are indication of higher marital quality. In this questionnaire 0.68 and consistency 0.72 is obtained.

Data analysis from descriptive statistical methods include tables and curves related to descriptive indications and distribution of variable's scores and perceptual statistics include Levene's test for control of assumed variance's homogeneity, Colmogroph and Smirnov test for assessment of normality of score's distribution in studied groups, test of homogeneity of regression slopes and at the end covariance analysis. Data analysis was done with spss-19 software.

3. Findings

Assumptions were analyzed statistically for assessment and trial. Results of statistical analysis comprises two parts of descriptive report including tables related to descriptive indications and perceptual report of final results that were obtained from covariance analysis.

3.1 Description of sample groups

Table 1. Shows average and standard deviation of age in sample groups

Sample group	average	Standard deviation
Intervention	04.32	7.3
Comparison	9.31	4.3

Based on obtained results; average age is 32.04 for intervention group and 31.9 for control group.

Table 2. Shows women sample group situation in terms of education

Groups	Education situation	Frequency	Percentage
Experiment	Below diploma	5	50
	Diploma	3	30
	Associates degree and B.A.	2	20
Control	Below diploma	6	60
	Diploma	2	20
	Associates degree and B.A.	2	20

As above table shows, there are 5 below diploma women; 3 diploma women and 2 associates degree and B.A.

women in experiment group and there are 6 below diploma women; 2 diploma women and 2 associates degree and B.A. women in control group.

Table 3. Shows men sample group situation in terms of education

Groups	Education situation	Frequency	Percentage
Experiment	Below diploma	6	60
	Diploma	3	30
	Associates degree and B.A.	1	10
Control	Below diploma	7	7
	Diploma	2	20
	Associates degree and B.A.	1	10

As above table shows, there are 6 below diploma men; 3 diploma men and 1 associates degree and B.A. men in experiment group and there are 7 below diploma men; 2 diploma men and 1 associates degree and B.A. men in control group.

Table 4. shows average descriptive indications and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in marital adjustment in two comparison and intervention groups accompanying by results of Colmogroph and Smirnov test for assessment of assumption of normality.

Table 4. Descriptive indications of average and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in marital adjustment in two groups of intervention and comparison

Groups	Variables	Quantity	Average	standard deviation	Z K.S	Meaning level
Intervention	Pretest	20	4.29	7.4	88	42
	Posttest	20	91.35	5.4	82	40
Comparison	Pretest	20	48.27	2.5	64	44
	Posttest	20	5.28	9.4	92	38

As it is seen in above table, average score of marital adjustment scale in intervention group in Pretest stage was equal to 29.4 and this average in comparison group was 27.48. Average score of marital adjustment scale in intervention group in Posttest stage was equal to 35.91 but this average in comparison group was 28.5. Normality of score distribution in Pretest and Posttest is also confirmed based on result of Colmogroph and Smirnov test.

Table 5. shows obtained results of assessment of mutual effects and inter testers in two groups based on marital adjustment.

Table 5. Results of tests of inter testers' effects (dependent variable: marital adjustment)

	Degree of freedom	Average of squares	F value	Meaning level
Pretest	1	55.52	68.3	04.0
Groups	1	51.1	11.0	78.0
Pretest * groups	1	22.16	21.1	28.0
Error	26	27.14		

Based on above table results, interactional effect of Pretest and groups (1.21) is not meaningful ($p > 0.05$). Considering obtained result can say that mutual vectors are not meaningful and eventually regression coefficients of groups can be equal.

3.2 Sympathy Factor

Table 6. shows average descriptive indications and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in sympathy of two comparison and intervention groups accompanying by results of Colmogroph and Smirnov test for assessment of assumption of normality.

Table 6. Descriptive indications of average and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in sympathy of the groups of intervention and comparison

Groups	Variables	Quantity	Average	standard deviation	Z K.S	Meaning level
Intervention	Pretest	20	5.8	1.3	77	42
	Posttest	20	4.11	6.2	65	45
Comparison	Pretest	20	4.7	97	74	43
	Posttest	20	2.8	6.2	88	39

As it is seen in above table, average score of sympathy in intervention group in Pretest stage was equal to 8.5 and this average in comparison group was 7.4. Average score of sympathy in intervention group in Posttest stage was equal to 11.4 but this average in comparison group was 8.02. Normality of score distribution in Pretest and Posttest is also confirmed based on result of Colmogroph and Smirnov test.

Table 7. shows obtained results of assessment of mutual effects and inter testers in two groups based on sympathy.

Table 7. Results of tests of inter testers' effects (dependent variable: sympathy)

	Freedom degree	Average of squares	F value	Meaning level
Pretest	1	72.135	10.11	01.0
Groups	1	33.102	46.12	01.0
Pretest* groups	1	74.5	46.0	52.0
Error	36	22.12		

Based on above table results, interactional effect of Pretest and groups (0.46) is not meaningful ($p > 0.05$). Considering obtained result can say that mutual vectors are not meaningful and eventually regression coefficients of groups can be equal.

3.3 Consistency Factor

Table 8. shows average descriptive indications and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in consistency factor of two comparison and intervention groups accompanying by results of Colmogroph and Smirnov test for assessment of assumption of normality.

Table 8. Descriptive indications of average and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in consistency of the groups of intervention and comparison

Groups	Variables	Quantity	Average	Standard deviation	Z K.S	Meaning level
Intervention	Pretest	20	3.7	5.2	67.0	47.0
	Posttest	20	3.10	6.2	92.0	39.0
Comparison	Pretest	20	2.7	4.2	92.0	39.0
	Posttest	20	5.7	8.2	75.0	42.0

As it is seen in above table, average score of consistency in intervention group in Pretest stage was equal to 7.3 and this average in comparison group was 7.2. Average score of consistency in intervention group in Posttest stage was equal to 10.3 but this average in comparison group was 7.5. Normality of score distribution in Pretest and Posttest is also confirmed based on result of Colmogroph and Smirnov test. 9-4 table shows obtained results of assessment of mutual effects and inter testers in two groups based on consistency.

Table 9. Results of tests of inter testers' effects (dependent variable: consistency)

	Freedom degree	Average of squares	F value	Meaning level
Pretest	1	22.44	09.6	01.0
Groups	1	78.31	38.4	01.0
Pretest* groups	1	88.0	12.0	78.0
Error	36	10.7		

Based on above table results, interactional effect of Pretest and groups (0.12) is not meaningful ($p>0.05$). Considering obtained result can say that mutual vectors are not meaningful and eventually regression coefficients of groups can be equal.

3.4 Satisfaction factor

Table 10. shows average descriptive indications and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in satisfaction of two comparison and intervention groups accompanying by results of Colmogroph and Smirnov test for assessment of assumption of normality.

Table 10. Descriptive indications of average and standard deviation of Pretest and Posttest scores in satisfaction of the groups of intervention and comparison

Groups	Variables	Quantity	Average	Standard deviation	Z K.S	Meaning level
Intervention	Pretest	20	3.7	2.3	48.0	57.0
	Posttest	20	6.11	8.1	77.0	41.0
Comparison	Pretest	20	8.8	09.2	98.0	32.0
	Posttest	20	2.8	91.1	94.0	34.0

As it is seen in above table, average score of satisfaction in intervention group in Pretest stage was equal to 7.3 and this average in comparison group was 8.8. Average score of satisfaction in intervention group in Posttest stage was equal to 11.6 but this average in comparison group was 8.2. Normality of score distribution in Pretest and Posttest is also confirmed based on result of Colmogroph and Smirnov test.

Table 11. shows obtained results of assessment of mutual effects and inter testers in two groups based on satisfaction.

Table 11. Results of tests of inter testers' effects (dependent variable: satisfaction)

	Freedom degree	Average of squares	F value	Meaning level
Pretest	1	17.62	11.6	01.0
Groups	1	52.41	08.4	01.0
Pretest* groups	1	77.4	46.0	55.0
Error	36	16.10		

Based on above table results, interactional effect of Pretest and groups (0.46) is not meaningful ($p>0.05$). Considering obtained result can say that mutual vectors are not meaningful and eventually regression coefficients of groups can be equal.

3.5 Emotionally focused couple therapy is effective on marital adjustment of couples.

Table 12. shows results of multivariate covariance analysis on Posttest scores of marital adjustment factors with comparison of Pretest ones in men sample.

Table 12. Summary of results of multivariate covariance analysis for comparison of average of Posttests of marital adjustment factors in intervention and comparison groups

Effect	Test	value	F	Df assumption	Df error	Meaning level
Group	Pillai effect	92.0	54.77	3	43	01.0

Wilks' lambda	07.0	54.77	3	43	01.0
Hotelling effect	08.14	54.77	3	43	01.0
Greatest root	08.14	54.77	3	43	01.0

Information of Table 12. shows that there is meaningful difference between intervention and comparison groups in terms of at least one of depending variables (sympathy, consistency, satisfaction). To assess difference point, MANCOVA covariance analysis on dependent variables was done. Results of this analysis is stated in 10-3 table. 19-3 table shows results of MANCOVA covariance analysis for comparison of Posttests of marital adjustment factors in intervention and comparison groups.

Table 13. Results of one way covariance analysis in MANCOVA text for comparison of Posttests of marital adjustment factors in intervention and comparison groups

Effect	Dependent variable	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Average of squares	F	Meaning level
Group	Sympathy	55.314	1	55.314	11.10	01.0
	Satisfaction	37.287	1	37.287	62.12	01.0
	Consistency	32.98	1	32.198	04.3	05.0

Obtained results in table 19-3 shows that covariance analysis in sympathy factor ($P=0.01$ and $F=10.11$) and consistency factor ($P=0.01$ and $F=12.62$) is meaningful. Also in consistency factor ($P<0.05$ and $F=3.04$) is meaningful. Considering obtained result it can be said that meaningful change in marital adjustment factors in Posttest has been formed in intervention group relative to comparison group due to effect of intervention. So research assumption is confirmed.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Obtained results of covariance analysis showed that there is meaningful difference between Posttest of intervention and comparison groups in sympathy and adjustment factor in 0.01 level and consistency factor in 0.05 level. Considering obtained result it can be said that meaningful change if formed in marital adjustment factors in Posttest of intervention group relative to comparison group due to effect of intervention. So research assumption is confirmed.

These findings are in line with Karl results (2012), Zolfaghari & Fatehzadeh (1387), Mokhtari, Hosseinian, Bahrami and colleagues (1388) and Hayati (1386).

Also obtained results based on positivist psychology approach and human oriented approaches are determinable. Hopeful believes and positive expectations of individuals can play a considerable role in creation of efficient affective relationship. Generally, from positivist psychology approach point of view some factors have direct and important effect on marriage structure that are including: character of both sides in marriage, expectations and beliefs of couples, level of coordinated and identic moral views of couples, relational beliefs, irrational expectations from each other.

In final conclusion it can be said that usage of emotionally focused couple therapy method in improvement of marital adjustment of couples who have conflict had considerable effect and it is proposed practically that conducting of training workshops that are related to these issues can increase knowledge and awareness level of couples and increase marital adjustment in couples and considering of increase of divorce rate within two last decades in country, emotionally focused therapy by help of couples for expansion of effective solutions and finding of exceptional cases in life can increase marital adjustment and prevent divorce.

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