The effect of anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure on reducing marital conflicts

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is reviewing the effectiveness of anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method on reducing marital conflicts among women of Tehran city. This research was tested by marital conflicts measurement questionnaire [1]. Sampling method is random and cluster. A district was randomly chosen from all educational districts of Tehran city and from that district a school was also randomly chosen. After registration of 60 voluntary mothers of students, 30 persons were randomly selected and assessed by marital conflict questionnaire. After the test, people were randomly positioned into two groups, experimental and control, with regular spacing. Then two groups were trained in anger management through cognitive-behavioral method (each group consisted of 15 persons). 20 days after ending the course, people of both groups were reassessed. Then the data was statistically analyzed.

Based on research hypotheses, the effect of anger management training on following variables was evaluated:

1- Increased cooperation,
2- promotion of sexual relationship,
3- increased support for children,
4- increased individual relationship with own family,
5- increased relationship with spouse's family and friends,
6- decreased emotional actions,
7- increased financial partnership between spouses.

After statistical data analysis by T-test, it was found that anger management training results in reducing marital conflicts in the above-mentioned 7 components.

Key words: Marital conflict, Anger management through cognitive-behavioral procedure

Introduction

Whereas family is where love is focused and is constant protective of different aspects of individual life and as the infrastructure of forming this little social system is couples' relationships, the root of most conflicts which are happened in marital life comes from establishing an improper relationship between couples, so relation skills play an important role in improving couples' relationship and consequently decreasing conflicts and adversary problems.

Traditionally we see the family as a place where love, rapport and support can be attained, despite adversity, where humans can take a breath and prepare to fight the outside world. But for millions of people with dysfunctional families, it is a fancy. Obviously no one intentionally wants to make the family dysfunctional but families accept that because they know no other way [2].

Mental health, body health and family health are affected by conflicts. Many researchers have reviewed the relationship between marital conflicts with depression anger, peptic disorders and diseases such as cancer. Adverse relations result in children's conflict with each other and with their parents as well as cause lack of health and competence in the relationship between family members [3].

The major cause of spouses' problems refers to their cognition and thinking. Cognitive-behavioral family clinicians believe that spouses are affected by their environment and their behaviors could be reformed through providing new educational methods, anger management, solving and controlling conflicts and so on. Through holding group training by cognitive-behavioral method, they could be trained in the special behavioral purposes which are themselves designed for facing illogical thoughts of spouses and other family members and directing the family to think in a new way.

Carlos Darna [4] established the first longitude assessment about spouses' training program. He wanted to know to what extent the mental training courses could reinforce kindness. So 1,370 spouses from 5 different cities of the USA participated in a training course and just after that and also after 6-8 months after ending the course they were assessed. It was concluded that kindness could be enhanced by training courses. His research showed that these courses have an extraordinary effect on sincerity, marital life matching, marital satisfaction and reduced conflicts and anger [5].

One of the common problems which are considered by couple therapists since a long time ago is marital conflict. This problem may have different forms and emerges in forms of depression of one or both spouses, addiction, conduct disorder of children, misbehavior and verbal abuses and physical violence which finally results in divorce [6, 7, 8].

Statistical and Population Information Dept. of National

Organization for Civil Registration in Iran shows that within the latest decades divorce and marital dissatisfaction are increasing. Reflecting on this matter, it is totally obvious for future generations. The experience of unexpressed and long-term anger could have harmful and consequences during the first years of marriage and even results in struggle, anger, isolation and finally divorce [9, 10].

All humans are willing to gleefully pass the rough path of life and by using any possible way and skill give it a new color when they feel that lost their happiness. According to behaviorism therapists, abnormal behaviors of couples come from feedback processes between them who their positive performance shall sometimes be increased by gaining and keeping cognitive-behavioral skills such as anger management, aggression management, love expression and proper decisions as well as they can find the proper path [11].

Research purpose and hypotheses

The major orientation of the present research is inspired from cognitive-behavioral procedure especially behavioral model which is related to anger management in marital conflicts because assisting spouses to reach a better life plays an important role in the mental health of the society. According to conflict statistics, there is a wide range of disorders from marital relationship to reduced spousal cooperation, reduced sexual relationship, increased emotional reactions, reduced family relations with spouse's family, increased relationship with own family and separating financial affairs.

Main hypothesis
Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective in reducing marital conflicts.

Sub-hypotheses
I Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on increasing spouses' cooperation.
II Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on increasing sexual satisfaction.
III Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on reducing emotional reactions.
IV Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on increasing support for children.
V Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on increasing relationship with spouse's family and friends.
VI Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on increasing individual relationship with own family.
VII Anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure is effective on improving financial partnership between spouses.

Definition of research variables

A. Theoretical definition of anger management

This skill enables a person to recognize anger inside themselves and in others and knowing its effects on behavior can provide a more proper reaction to this emotion [12, 13].

Anger management skill is an initiated cognitive-behavioral process by which people can determine, discover or invent solution strategies for daily problems.

B. Theoretical definition of marital conflict

Marital conflict is any struggles in marital life which cause imbalance in establishing a positive marital relationship.

Sampling method and sample volume

The method of sampling is random and multiphase cluster sampling. Firstly district No. 6 was randomly selected among all Tehran educational districts, and then one school was selected from all schools of district No. 6. It was announced that in this school would be held some courses under the title of "Anger Management Training" within 8-10 sessions and as the goal of this training was married mothers in Tehran, the mothers with the following terms could voluntary register (fathers were not selected as the research population because they didn't participate and actively attend in training classes):

1- Being housewife (not working outside of home)
2- Age between 25 and 45
3- Married just once
4- Having at least one child
5- Minimum of 5 years marriage

After announcement, 60 people registered voluntarily. Among the applicants, 30 mothers were randomly chosen and assessed by marital conflict pretest [1]. Then to randomly place people into the two groups (experimental and control), we put 15 people in the control group and 15 in the experimental group and then one of the groups, as the experimental group, were tested for anger management skills.

Research tools

The tools of this research are marital conflict questionnaires [1]. Marital conflict questionnaire (MCQ) has been provided by Dr. Bagher Sanayi and Tahereh Barati according to clinical experiments in Iran. Its purpose is testing conflicts between husbands and wives and its main dimensions. This questionnaire has been distributed in a 111-person group consisting of 53 males and 58 females who referred to judicial authorities and/or consulting centers to remove their marital conflicts where a 108-person group consisted of ordinary couples (53 males and 55 females). The evidence group was chosen among MA students of Tehran city and employees who took or did not take a high school degree and who were working in Tehran educational district 2. In this tool, the higher score the more conflict and the lower score the less conflict and the better the relationship.

Research validity: Cronbach's alpha for the whole questionnaire on a 32-person group is 53% and its seven subscales are as follows:

Reduced cooperation 30%, reduced sexual relationship 50%, increased emotional reactions 73%, increased support for child 60%, increased individual relationship with own family 64%, decreased family relations with spouse's family and friends 64%, separated financial affairs (means each spouses took control of their own budget) 51% [1].

Data analysis method

In this research independent T-test was used. This test was done to compare means of pretest and after-test scores of groups. SPSS was applied to data analysis.

Data Results

1. Data description

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of marriage age of applicants based on experimental and control groups

	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Frequency %	Frequency	Frequency %
Under 15 years	-	-	1	7.1
15-20 years	8	57.14	9	64.28
21-25 years	5	35.17	1	7.1
26-30 years	1	7.1	2	14.28
30-35 years	-	-	1	7.1
Total	14	100	14	100

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of marriage duration of applicants based on experimental and control groups

	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Frequency %	Frequency	Frequency %
Under 5 years	1	7.1	-	-
6-10 years	4	28.57	1	7.1
11-15 years	5	35.71	5	35.71
16-20 years	1	7.1	2	14.28
More than 20	3	21.4	3	42.85
Total	14	100	14	100

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of number of children of applicants based on experimental and control groups

	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Frequency %	Frequency	Frequency %
One	6	42.9	2	14.3
Two	7	50	7	50
Three	1	7.1	4	28.6
four	-	-	1	7.1
Total	14	100	14	100

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of spouse's marriage age of applicants based on experimental and control groups

	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Frequency %	Frequency	Frequency %
Under 20 years	1	7.1	2	14.28
21-25 years	4	28.57	7	50
26-30 years	7	50	4	28.57
31-35 years	2	14.28	1	7.1
Total	14	100	14	100

Table 5: Frequency and percentage of financial situation of family of applicants based on experimental and control groups

	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Frequency %	Frequency	Frequency %
Good	2	14.3	4	28.6
Average	10	71.4	10	71.4
Bad	2	14.3	-	-
Total	14	100	14	100

2.**Data inferential analysis**

Table 6: Levene's F-test to review equivalent of variances

	Levene's F-test	Level of Significance
Marital conflicts	2.66	0.114
Reduced cooperation	3.47	0.073
Reduced sexual relationships	2.66	0.114
Increased emotional reactions	1.11	0.3
Increased support for children	0.065	0.801
Increased individual relationship with own family	5.71	0.024
Reduced relation with spouse's family & friends	2.61	0.117
Separating financial affairs	0.048	0.828

According to level of significance of Levene's test in marital conflicts scales and in all scales which is higher than 0.05, Levene's F-test null hypothesis (variances of two groups are equal) was confirmed in all scales except decreased individual relationship with own family. According to calculated level of significance related to above variable, as the P=0.024 which is lower than error level of 0.05 the Levene's F-test null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 7: T-test of independent groups to review difference of means of pre-test scores for marital conflicts and its subscales

Variables	Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Marital conflicts	Experimental	15	135.93	23.15	12.33	1.93	28	0.064
	Control	15	123.6	8.72				
Reduced cooperation	Experimental	15	14.66	3.88	1.26	1.006	28	0.323
	Control	15	13.4	2.94				
Reduced sexual relationships	Experimental	15	18.6	6.08	2.8	1.67	28	0.105
	Control	15	15.8	2.24				
Increased emotional reactions	Experimental	15	23.73	4.3	5.73	3.92	28	0.001
	Control	15	18	3.68				
Increased support for children	Experimental	15	17.93	4.35	-1.53	0.99	28	0.327
	Control	15	19.46	4.06				
Increased individual relationship with own family	Experimental	15	18.33	5.28	2.6	1.74	28	0.092
	Control	15	15.73	2.31				
Reduced relations with spouse's family & friends	Experimental	15	20.66	3.92	0.46	0.375	28	0.711
	Control	15	20.20	2.8				
Separating financial affairs	Experimental	15	20.13	3.18	0.2	0.15	28	0.882
	Control	15	19.93	4.06				

Conflicts scores and all their components except increased emotional reactions are higher than error level of 0.05 and the difference of means is not significant. So it can be said that the two experimental and control groups are almost at the same level in terms of marital conflicts except in the component of increased emotional reactions in pretest stage and after holding training sessions of anger management through cognitive-behavioral method.

Table 8: Levene's F-test to review equivalent of variances

	Levene's F-test	Level of Significance
Marital conflicts	2.451	0.129
Reduced cooperation	0.61	0.441
Reduced sexual relationships	5.034	0.033
Increased emotional reactions	0.272	0.606
Increased support for children	0.022	0.884
Increased individual relationship with own family	0.123	0.729
Reduced relations with spouse's family & friends	0.174	0.68
Separating financial affairs	1.622	0.213

All scores of Levene's F-test levels of significance related to marital conflicts (P=0.129), decreased cooperation (P=0.441), increased emotional reactions (P=606), increased support for child (P=0.884), increased individual relationship with own family (P=0.729), decreased family relations with spouse's family and friends (P=0.68) and separated financial affairs (P=0.213) are higher than 0.05 and in these scores Levene's F-test null hypothesis (variances of both groups are equal) was confirmed.

Regarding level of significance of decreased sexual relationship (P=0.033) which is lower than 0.05, Levene's F-test first hypothesis (variances of both groups are not equal) was confirmed.

Main hypothesis: Anger management training influences decreasing marital conflicts.

Table 9: T-test of independent groups to review differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for marital conflicts

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-20.33	20.22				
Control	15	0.66	7.34	-21	-3.78	28	0.001
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=-3.78, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is significant and with confidence coefficient of 95% the null hypothesis of the research is rejected. So the observed difference between differential means of scores is not stochastic and it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method was effective in decreasing marital conflicts.

First sub-hypothesis: Anger management training is effective in improving frequency of sexual relations.

Table 10: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for sexual relationship

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-4.2	6.13				
Control	15	1.06	1.31	-5.26	3.25	28	0.003
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=-3.25, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is significant and with confidence coefficient of 95% the null hypothesis of the research is rejected. So the observed difference is not stochastic and it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method was effective in improving frequency of sexual relations. Second sub-hypothesis: Anger management training influences support for child.

Table 11: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for support for children

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-2.8	3.58				
Control	15	-2.4	4.35	-0.4	0.274	28	0.786
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=-0.274, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is not significant and the null hypothesis of the research is confirmed. So it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method had no effect on increased support for children.

Third sub-hypothesis: Anger management training influences decreasing individual relationship with own family.

Table 12: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for individual relationship with own family

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-1.66	4.28				
Control	15	2.4	4.43	-4.06	2.55	28	0.016
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=2.55, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is significant and with confidence coefficient of 95% the null hypothesis of the research is rejected. So it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method was effective in decreasing individual relationship with own family.

Fourth sub-hypothesis: Anger management training influences decreasing family relations with spouse's family and friends.

Table 13: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for relationship with spouse's family and friends

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-1.6	3.26				
Control	15	0.53	3.58	-2.13	1.70	28	0.1
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=1.70, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is not significant and the null hypothesis of the research is confirmed. So it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method had no effect on decreasing family relation with spouse's family and friends.

Fifth sub-hypothesis: Anger management training influences increasing financial partnership between spouses.

Table 14: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for financial partnership

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-1.26	3.1				
Control	15	-0.13	5.93	-1.13	0.65	28	0.518
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=0.65, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is not significant and null hypothesis of the research is confirmed. So it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method had no effect on increasing financial partnership between spouses.

Sixth sub-hypothesis: Anger management training influences increasing emotional reactions.

Table 15: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for emotional reactions

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-5.8	4.05				
Control	15	-1.66	4.32	-7.46	-4.87	28	0.001
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=7.46, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is significant and with confidence coefficient of 95% the null hypothesis of the research is rejected. So the observed difference between differential means of scores is not stochastic and it could be said that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral method was effective in increasing emotional reactions.

Seventh sub-hypothesis: Anger management training influences increasing cooperation between spouses.

Table 16: T-test of independent groups to review difference of differential means of two groups (experimental and control) for spouses' cooperation

Groups	Qty	Mean	Standard deviation	Difference of means	T-ratio	df	Level of significance
Experimental	15	-3.73	3.45				
Control	15	0.2	2.8	-3.93	3.42	28	0.002
Total	30						

Calculated T (t=3.42, df=28) in error level of 0.05 is significant and with confidence coefficient of 95% the null hypothesis of the research is rejected.

Results interpretation

Markman et.al [14] provided a report for a 5-year review in terms of assessing effect of prevention from marital distress by conflict control training. This assessment included a 5-session program of life skill and conflict control training. Within 5 years follow up in comparing with control group, trained couples showed higher level of positive relation skills and lower negative relation skills and violence.

Lange and Butler et.al [15, 16] reviewed the effect of anger self-management training in dysfunctional couples. They asked 9 couples to write to their spouses rather than express their anger. The results showed remarkable improvement in anger management of couples against each other [6].

Haji Abolzadeh [17] in research under the title of "The effect of relation skills training through cognitive-behavioral procedure on the rate of marital conformity of couples who residing at Karaj city" and concluded that life skills training such as anger management, effective conversation, solving the problems and innovative thinking through cognitive-behavioral method influence conformity rate of couples. They believe that anger management skills are of the most important in this matter.

In a research under the title of "The effects of anger management training on preventing delinquency of children from maladaptive families in Tehran City", anger and violence were mentioned as factors which cause violence and aggression in maladaptive families. This emotion could be trained and control by cognitive-behavioral method which will reduce conflicts among family and children [18, 19].

Finally it is concluded that three hypotheses of support for children, relation with spouse's family and friends and increased financial partnership are not confirmed. Because the research hypotheses have been reviewed as a major hypothesis and seven sub-hypotheses and it was shown that this training was powerful in other sub-hypotheses, it can be concluded that anger management training through cognitive-behavioral procedure influences reducing marital conflicts.

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