



## **Effectiveness of communication skills training on intimacy and marital adjustment among married women**

**Shahrbanoo Naghdi Babaee<sup>1</sup> and Shahrbanoo Ghahari<sup>2\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>MA in Clinical Psychology, Tonekaboon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

<sup>2</sup>PhD, Assistant professor of clinical Psychology, Iran University of Medical Sciences (IUMS)

Center of Excellence in psychiatry, School of Behavioral Sciences and Mental Health,

Department of Mental Health, Tehran, Iran, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Research

Center, Addiction Institute, Department of Psychiatry, Mazandaran University of Medical

Sciences, Sari, Iran

\*Corresponding Email: [ghahhari.sh@iums.ac.ir](mailto:ghahhari.sh@iums.ac.ir)

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### **ABSTRACT**

*there has been attention toward maintenance and increase intimacy and marital adjustment among couples using some methods such as life skills due to the increased divorce rate in current societies; hence, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of communication skills training on intimacy and marital adjustment among married women who have referred to counseling centers in Tehran, Iran.: this research is an experimental study with pretest and posttest. Statistical population of study included all women living in regions 2 and 5 of Tehran City who had been randomly chosen among all regions. These women referred to counseling centers in Tehran during 2016. There were 50 members randomly chosen from women who had gained low score within marital intimacy and adjustment questionnaire and then assigned into two experimental and control groups (25 members in each group). Experimental group were taught communication skills during 10 90-minutes sessions and control group was in waiting list. The obtained data were analyzed using multi-variable analysis of covariance through SPSS-22 software. According to the results obtained from analyses in study, there was a significant difference between two groups in terms of intimacy and marital adjustment after intervention ( $P<0/05$ ). the obtained findings indicated that communication skills training could effect on increase in intimacy and marital adjustment.*

**Keywords:** communication skills, life skills, intimacy, marital adjustment

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Marital adjustment is a process more than being a trait or behavior that indicates conformity of wife and husband when interacting with each other [1]. Marital satisfaction in marital adjustment as one of deepest and basic pleasure of human life while lack of this important point causes pain and discomfort[2]. Many of researches have confirmed the effect of marital adjustment in a family on various aspects such as physical and mental health and social-mental adjustment[3&4]. According to Hodford et al [5] effective factors in marital adjustment include three categories of personal characteristics (age, physical and personality situation), state factors (income level, social class, education, and culture), and life events (relationships before marriage, stressful events, and risky incidents). The results of studies indicate that there is a relation between dissatisfaction with marital life and their depression[6&7].

Intimacy comprises different meanings while there is not unanimity between researchers about its basic concept so that it is hard to have an accurate definition of intimacy [8&9].There is a close relationship between intimacy and

quality of life so that it is usually considered as a basic criterion and key feature of marital communications with a considerable effect on marital adjustment and mental health of young couples leading to reduction in depression and increase in happiness, welfare, and satisfaction with life as strong predictor for physical health[10-13]. Lack of intimacy between couples is a reason for distress of couples and collapse of family with a negative effect on relationships between couples leading to maladjustment, stress, depression and mental disorders. In this regard, Yoo et al [14] and Taghiyar et al [15] indicated that there is a positive and significant correlation between sexual satisfaction, marital commitment and intimacy.

Group life skills are mental and interpersonal skills that help people with conscious decision-making, problem solving, critical thought and creative thought, effective relationship, healthy relationships, having sympathy for others, management, and coping with life through a healthy and beneficial method. Life skills comprise personal skills and other skills in relation with other [16]. Botvin and Kantor [17] believe that communication skills and self-monitoring are the main skills. Life skills would assist person not to think ordinary and not to accept information without processing them [18]. The researches have indicated that communication patterns and relationship level between couples are the best factors that indicate marital satisfaction and better quality of life[19&20]. Oprisan and Cristae [21] proved in a study that ability to make an appropriate relations, self-esteem, and happiness of couples could effect on their perception of marital satisfaction regardless of marriage duration. Yalcin and Karahan[22] indicated in a research that improvement of communication skills has a positive effect on marital adjustment levels leading to long-term behavioral corrections in couples.

Since life skills training can effect on improvement of interpersonal relationships, this study has been conducted to examine the effectiveness of communication skills training on intimacy and marital adjustment among married women who referred to counseling centers in Tehran City, Iran.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is an experimental research with pretest-posttest design. Statistical population of study included all women living in regions 2 and 5 of Tehran City who had been randomly chosen among all regions. These women referred to counseling centers in Tehran during 2016. There were 50 members randomly chosen from women who had gained low score within marital intimacy and adjustment questionnaire and then assigned into two experimental and control groups (25 members in each group). Experimental group were taught communication skills during 10 90-minutes sessions and control group was in waiting list. The obtained data were analyzed using multi-variable analysis of covariance through SPSS-22 software.

### Research instrument

**Marital intimacy needs questionnaire of Bagarozzi:** this questionnaire includes 41 questions with the aim of evaluating dimensions of marital intimacy designed by Bagarozzi[23] to evaluate intimacy needs within emotional, psychological, rational, sexual, physical, spiritual, aesthetical and recreational-social dimensions. This questionnaire includes 41 questions that respondent would responses to each question through ranked method from 1 "there is not such need" to 10 "there is such need".

Etemadi[24] distributed the questionnaire among 15 advisor professors and 15 spouses to determine content validity and content validity of questionnaire was confirmed. Total reliability coefficient of questionnaire was obtained to 0/94 using Cronbach's alpha.

**Questionnaire of Lock-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test:** Lock-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test is a short self-report questionnaire designed to measure the quality of marriage function. This most common measurement tool is applied in this field. This test includes 15 items indicating that respondent agrees with his or her spouse about some important activities within marital adjustment. The test should be filled out with each of couples separately so that it would be possible to measure total marital adjustment based on the interpersonal perception of marital relationships. Score range of this test includes from 2 to 158. Lower scores indicate maladjustment and higher score indicate adjustment while the scores lower than 100 indicate distress within marital relationships. Marital adjustment test is recognized as a valid tool in psychology literature to measure satisfaction with marriage and a scale to predict future adjustment. This test has indicated 90% validity with application of differentiation method. This test has a high validity through distinguishing well-adjusted couples from distressed (unsatisfied) couples. The internal consistency of this test has been good using Spearman-Brown formula and correlation coefficient between two groups of couples

has been equal to 90%[25] This test was translated by Mazaheri (1997, 2000) and applied for a sample of Iranian couples [26]. Darabi et al [27] obtained the reliability of questionnaire equal to 78% and 93% using Cronbach's alpha and split-half methods indicating acceptable coefficients for questionnaire.

### Training package

Training package is based on the texts of life skills training provided by World Health Organization. Communication skill training was done in-group through 10 sessions by a clinical psychologist.

Session 1: familiarity with members, introducing group rules, and presenting some explanations about verbal and non-verbal communications

Session 2: familiarity with speaking skill

Session 3: familiarity with listening skill

Session 4: familiarity with requesting (demanding) skill

Session 5: familiarity with expressing positive emotions skill, physical contact and verbal caress

Session 6: becoming familiar with skill of enjoying the leisure time through common and mutual joyful activities

Session 7: becoming familiar with anger and annoyance control skill

Session 8: becoming familiar with creative criticism skill

Session 9: becoming familiar with negotiation and dispute settlement skill

Session 10: a review on all sessions and receive members' feedback

### Findings

The studied people in this research were equal 50 members that were assigned into experimental (25 members) and control (25 members) groups. Age range of participants was between 19 and 45 and total average of participants' age was about 30. In terms of education level, 6% had secondary school education, 20% diploma, 4% associate degree, 46% BA and 24% MA that the most percentage was related to BA and MA degrees (70%). In terms of marriage duration, 58% were married less than 5 years, 22% between 5 and 10 years, and 20% were married more than 10 years.

### Research hypothesis: communication skills training can effect on intimacy and marital adjustment among married women.

To test the main hypothesis of study, MANCOVA method was applied. The software output is as follows:

**Table 1. Multi-variable Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to examine the effectiveness of intervention on intimacy and marital adjustment**

Variables		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F value	Sig level	$\eta^2$
Specified model	Adjustment	2434/277	3	811/426	4/233	0/010	0/851
	Intimacy	48/593	3	16/198	87/276	0/000	0/112
Fix value	Adjustment	0/679	1	0/679	0/004	0/953	0/502
	Intimacy	8/623	1	8/623	46/460	0/000	0/000
Marital intimacy	Adjustment	48/537	1	48/537	0/253	0/617	0/013
	Intimacy	0/014	1	0/014	0/076	0/748	0/079
Marital adjustment	Adjustment	872/915	1	872/915	4/554	0/038	0/002
	Intimacy	0/110	1	0/110	0/591	0/446	0/000
Group	Adjustment	1034/903	1	1034/903	5/399	0/025	0/846
	Intimacy	46/962	1	46/962	253/042	0/000	0/017
Error	Adjustment	8817/743	46	191/690			
	Intimacy	8/537	46	0/186			
Total	Adjustment	186129/000	50				
	Intimacy	1441/983	50				
Specified total	Adjustment	11252/020	49				
	Intimacy	57/130	49				

The f value of the effect of independent variable (group) is significant on intimacy (253/042) and marital adjustment (5/399); it means that there is a significant difference between scores of two experimental and control groups at posttest of life skills and social interaction after exclusion of the effect of pretest. Therefore,  $H_0$  (non-significant mean difference between two groups at posttest after elimination of possible effect of pretest) is rejected. Hence, main hypothesis is accepted ( $P<0/05$ ). Partial value of  $\eta^2$  is indicated for each parameter and effect that describes total distribution caused by a factor.

It was determined that there is a significant difference between means of posttest of two experimental and control groups for variables of intimacy and marital adjustment after elimination of the effect of pretest. The following table indicates the higher mean of experimental and control groups.

**Table 2. Post hoc for variable of marital intimacy (total)**

Group 1	group 2	Mean difference (group 1 minus group 2)	Standard error	Sig level
Control group	experimental group	-1/986*	0/125	0/000
Experimental group	control group	1/986*	0/125	0/000

**Table 3. Post hoc for variable of marital adjustment (total)**

Group 1	group 2	Mean difference (group 1 minus group 2)	Standard error	Sig level
Control group	experimental group	-9/323*	4/013	0/025
Experimental group	control group	9/323*	4/013	0/025

According to the tables, experimental group mean is higher than control group mean using post hoc.

## DISCUSSION

According to the obtained results, communication skills training can effect on increase in intimacy and marital adjustment among married women. This finding is coordinated with results of study by Yalcin and Karahan[28] that concluded training program of communications can positively affect marital adjustment improving couples' relationships and leading to long-term behavioral changes in couples. The finding of present study is also coordinated with results obtained from following studies: Mohammadi et al [29] about the effectiveness of family functioning in communication skills training; Halford[30] about the effectiveness of life skills training on marital satisfaction of couples; Sajadi et al [31] who conducted a study under the title of "study of effectiveness of life skills training on marital satisfaction among young couples" and proved that life skills training would improve marital satisfaction; Bektas and Tevfik[32] about the effect of couple communication program on marital adjustment of women and behavioral change in couples during long term; findings of studies by Joaning[33] and Alejandra [34] in relation with effectiveness of communication skills training and life skills on solving marital conflicts between couples and increasing their satisfaction; findings of study by Mohammadi and Arefi[35] about the positive and significant relation between communication styles and marital adjustment.

The obtained finding of present study is also coordinated with results obtained from the conducted studies by Hamid et al [36] about the effectiveness of communication skills training on intimacy and life satisfaction of couples; study of Folladi and Khojaste[37] about the effectiveness of life skills training on increase in emotional intimacy and interest in marital relationship among married students.

According to the mentioned results, it can be stated that life skills training would help couples to have a creative interaction so that they can solve many of their problems, have better relationships, being adjusted with each other and such abilities would lead to marital satisfaction[38,39]. Communication skills training for couples is effective in reducing separation and divorces among them as well as increasing their intimacy[40,41].

## CONCLUSION

According to the obtained findings, life skill training is effective in intimacy and marital adjustment among married women. Therefore, this finding can be applied to teach couples especially women to improve their life and reduce divorce rate in society.

### Limitations and Suggestions

This study was only included married women; hence, it is suggested for further studies to consider men. This paper was only included the effectiveness of communication skill training that is one of the life skills; hence, it is recommended to study the effect of other life skills such as the effect of emotional regulation on intimacy and marital adjustment of couples.

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