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Life Skills Training On Couples' Stress and Anxiety About To Marriage

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of life skills training on couples' stress and anxiety about to marriage. The statistical population of the study is all couples about to marriage, who consult pre-marriage counseling centers. After initial examination, 40 girls about to marriage were selected (20 girls in the experimental group and 20 girls in the control group) and randomly divided into two groups. The research instruments were anxiety questionnaire and perceived stress questionnaire. (Cohen et al, 1988). Data were analyzed into descriptive and inferential statistics. At the descriptive level the mean and standard deviation and at the inferential level covariance analysis were used. The results showed that life skills training can reduce the anxiety and stress of couples about to marriage.

Keywords: Stress, Anxiety, Life Skills Training.

INTRODUCTION

Family identity is one of the most important social identity that begins with marriage. Since marriage is the beginning of this vital social identity, it has fundamental importance because family identity is formed by marriage. However, marriage is one of the most complex human relationships that exists between male and female interaction (Boland et al., 2008). Davis, Greenstein, and Gerteisen Marks (2007), have identified marriage as one of the most difficult stages in the transition of life. Although marriage is considered an important identity in all societies and having a successful marriage is a main and ideal goal for anyone (Myers, Madathil, & Tingle, 2005), studies have shown that 40 to 50 percent of all first marriages end up in divorce (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Madathil & Benschoff, 2008). An extensive researches have been done to understand the causes of marital satisfaction or its opposite point, divorce. The results have shown that having unrealistic expectations (Larson, 1988); communication skills and sexuality (Ziaee et al., 2014); emotional immaturity (Gharibi, Rostami, Mohamadian Sharif, & Monqi, 2016); the inability to manage stress (Sohrabi, Jahani, Mehrabian, Marashian, & Zaheri, 2016), are among the causes of marital incompatibility. Generally, there is a broad consensus that prevention is much more effective and desirable than attempting to correct problems as it starts. Accordingly, a review of the literature on pre-marital counseling shows that pre-marriage training is one of the ways to prevent marital problems (Van Epp, 2006).

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Pre-marriage training is an important preventive tools for families and individuals to avoid divorce costs(Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004). Accordingly, some interventions such as life skills training that train several skills can be effective in this regard. So, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of training these skills on the stress and anxiety of couples about to marriage.

Literature Review

Researchers believe that the two main factors of interpersonal differences are at first a difference in the individuals'genetic structure and then in their living environment. Each individual has its own genetic structure and each family has its own lifestyle, and training approach. Families train different children based on a variety of training approach. The school environment, friends, peers have a particular impact on our personality development. The dominant culture in the society and our social class can influence the psycho-social features. The above set of factors makes us unique person that is different in some areas or some features, or is similar to one another and in our individual interactions, we are well aware of our deep personal differences with humans or differences with other groups. Our point of view towards interpersonal differences influences how we deal with others.

Yilmaz and Kalkan (2010), in a study entitled “the effectiveness of a pre-marriage enrichment program on satisfaction with communication” concluded that this program can reduce the mental health problems of people and it has a positive effect on increasing the satisfaction of marital relationships.

Mustapha, Odebode, and Adegboyega (2017), in a study on “The effect of pre-marriage training on the stability of marriage concluded that training skills such as problem solving, decision-making, communication skills with spouse, empathy skills, and the ability to have sexual relationships in post-marital stability were effective.

Silliman and Schumm (2000), in a review article on “investigating the preparations programs for marriage “concluded that these trainings had a positive effect on marital compatibility and can increase the intimacy and quality of couples’ life and reduce stress and marital conflicts.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the effect of life skills training on couples' anxiety and stress was investigated. The research method was semi-experimental using the experimental and control groups.

Table 1: Summary of instruction

	groups	Pre-test	instruction	Post-test
R	E	T ₁	x	T ₂
R	C	T ₁	-	T ₂

Participants

The statistical population of this study included 120 couples about to marriage consult the pre-marriage counseling centers. The participants of this study were two groups of couples about to marriage (20 subjects in the experimental group and 20 subjects in control group) based on convenience sampling. They were asked to answer the anxiety and stress questionnaires. Couples who received high scores in stress and anxiety questionnaires were selected as sample groups and then randomly assigned into two groups of experimental and control groups. In order

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to observe ethics after the end of the research process, training was also carried out on the control group. The experimental group received life skills training in 8 sessions of 60 minutes weekly, while the control group did not receive any training during the research process.

In this research, with regard to the goals, in addition to the demographic questionnaire, two questionnaires of anxiety and perceived stress were used.

Anxiety Questionnaire: Anxiety questionnaire was originally prepared by Beck and Clark (1988). This questionnaire was on a Likert scale included 21 items which ranged from never (0) to always (3). The minimum score in this questionnaire is 0 and the maximum score is 63. Beck and Clark (1988) reported the consistency of this questionnaire 92% and its validity 0.75. Fydrich, Dowdall, and Chambless (1992), concluded that this test can well differentiate between anxious and normal people. The validity of the test has been reported through the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78.

Perceived Stress Questionnaire: Perceived stress questionnaire was originally prepared by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983). This questionnaire was on a Likert scale included 14 items which ranged from never (0) to always (4). A higher score indicates a higher stress. Cohen et al. (1983) obtained the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire in three studies between 0.84- 0.85. Also, Heinen, Bullinger, and Kocalevent (2017), obtained the Cronbach alpha coefficient of %80.

After coordinating with the pre-marriage counseling center in Fars Province, the need for such training was reminded by the director of the center and in coordination with the director and other staff, the questionnaires were distributed among all the couples. After distributing the questionnaire for 1 month, the questionnaires were analyzed and those who scored a high score in the stress and anxiety questionnaires were invited to do the research and they were placed in two groups. Then the first group was under manipulation and the control group did not receive any manipulation. After that post- test was administrated. It should be noted that the training package based on the life skills package was developed. The summary of the contents of the training sessions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sessions Summary

Sessions Summary
1st session: Iintroduction, expression of company rules at meetings, introduction of life skills programs, pre-test administration
2nd session: Teaching Self-awareness Skill and its dimensions
3rd session: Empathy Skills Training
4th session: Communication skills training
5th session: Problem-solving and decision-making skills training
6th session: Stress management skills training (Stress introduction, Stress experience, Stress cycle, The way of dealing with Stress)
7th session: Anger Management Skill Training and emotions expression in the right way
8th session: Ambiguities resolution, post-test administration

To analyze the data from the research instruments, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the purpose of presenting the results. Descriptive statistics including frequency table and frequency percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. And for analyzing the research hypotheses in the inferential statistics, covariance analysis was used. Results were submitted to SPSS20 for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

The following table shows the results in the research.

Table 3. Results of covariance analysis of the effect of life skills training on couples' stress in post-test

Source of change	Sum of square	df	Mean of square	F	sig	ETA square	Test power
Modified model	506.54	1	506.54	39.68	0.000	0.51	1
Pre-test	5.85	1	5.85	0.45	0.50	0.012	0.10
group	63.49	1	63.49	4.97	0.03	0.11	0.58
error	472.29	37	712.76				

Table 3 delineates the results of covariance test (ANCOVA). Based on this information, life skills training on couples' stress about to marriage in the post-test phase is effective. Because the level of significance is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). In other words, the difference between the control group and the experimental groups is significant due to the effect of training on the dependent variable (stress). Also, it can be said that the difference between the scores of the control and experimental groups indicates that the stress of couples is significantly different before and after training. Considering ETA square we can say that 13% of this decrease is due to the effect of training.

Table 4. Results of the covariance analysis of the effect of life skills training on couples' anxiety in the post-test

Source of change	Sum of square	df	Mean of square	F	sig	ETA square	Test power
Modified model	311.75	1	311.75	7.12	0.01	0.16	0.73
Pre-test	23.39	1	23.39	0.50	0.48	0.01	0.10
group	198.66	1	198.66	4.26	0.04	0.10	0.52
error	1723/35	37	46.55				

Table 4 delineates the results of covariance test (ANCOVA). Based on this information, life skills training on couples' anxiety about to marriage in the post-test phase is effective. Because the level of significance is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). In other words, the difference between the control group and the experimental groups is significant due to the effect of training on the dependent variable (anxiety). Also, it can be said that the difference between the scores of the control and experimental groups indicates that the anxiety of couples is significantly different before and after training. Considering ETA square we can say that 10% of this decrease is due to the effect of training.

CONCLUSION

In explaining the result, it must be said that marriage is a stage in which a person faces multiple choices, probabilities and aspirations. This stage causes major changes in love, attention to the world and even work. On the other hand, interpersonal relationships and failure in this regard have deep effects on the person's mood and health. All of these issues cause pre-marriage periods are considered to be stressful for some people. However, training some skills can reduce the amount of experienced stress. The important thing is that in the pre-marriage period, the person faces various decisions and the inability to make decisions and solve problems efficiently can exacerbate these stresses. Many couples have little decision-making skill. In many cases, one cannot define the problem well and comprehensively and he does not know how to face and solve the problem and finally, he does not know which choice to choose from. So at first a person learns step-by-step problem-solving explanation, propose solutions, logically and without distraction consider the disadvantages and benefits of them and they notice that each choice has costs and benefits and then the best choice is the one that has the lowest cost and the most

benefit. Accordingly, improving their ability to make decisions and solve problems can reduce their stress.

As it was mentioned in the first, pre-marriage periods can be a source of great anxiety due to the sources of stress, wide variations and uncertainties in future tracing. Accordingly, teaching skills such as decision-making skills can increase individual's ability to make decisions. In many cases, hesitation, decision-making disability and fear of failure cause anxiety. In particular, people expect their decision to be free of charge. However, in the training of decision-making skills, it is learned that every decision has a cost and they must accept these costs. The result of such a skill can be to reduce anxiety in the individual.

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