



Research Article

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**The study of effectiveness of system-behavioral couple therapy on increasing of couple's marital satisfaction**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of system-behavioral couple therapy on increasing the sexual satisfaction of couples referring to the center of Qazvin province counseling and psychological services. The sample consisted of 20 maladjusted couples that were selected through available sampling and were tested in two experimental and control groups. The pretest was done for both groups by Enrich sexual satisfaction questionnaire, and then the experimental group was exposed to training of system-behavioral couple therapy for eight sessions, 60 minutes per each session. Finally, post-test was administered for both the experimental and control groups. The study used a pretest-posttest design with control group, and t-test and analysis of covariance were used to analyze the data. The results showed that training of system-behavioral couple therapy can increase sexual satisfaction in experimental group compared to the control group. So, training of system-behavioral couple therapy causes the sexual satisfaction to be increased.*

**Keywords:** system-behavioral couple therapy, couples, sexual satisfaction

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**INTRODUCTION**

Among all associations, organizations and social institutions, family has the most important, valuable and effective role. Family is considered as the most natural units of reproduction and the most universal social unit; because it covers all members of the community. Family has the educational and social significance. Individuals come into existence by family and the society also gets into existence by members of family and since that the family institution is the generator of human resource and is the entrance of the other social institutions and is considered as the principal pillar and foundation of each society (1). Marriage is the introductory stage of formation of a family. Family is formed by marriage and its continuity and survival depends on the continuity and survival of marriage. Although a satisfactory marriage is an important factor in community mental health, but if the marriage and family life create unfavorable conditions for satisfying the mental needs of couples, not only does not materialize mental health, but also it leaves negative and sometimes irreversible consequences, so that nervous disorders, depression and suicides are the result of family conflicts and marital maladjustments (2).

One of the most important factors that affect the survival and growth of family is healthy relationships and understanding between members, especially husband and wife. Sexual satisfaction means to have a favorable sense of marriage. (3) Suggest that sexual satisfaction in marriage is a personal experience that is measurable only by the person himself/herself in response to the rate of sexual relation. They believe that sexual satisfaction depends on the individuals' expectations. During the common life of couples, different variables affect the way of their relations that in turn they pave the way for sexual satisfaction or dissatisfaction, if these changes are not done proportional with the needs of couples, they lead to their sexual dissatisfaction and this fact can have a destructive impact on

couples and their children, and annihilate the family and lead it toward divorce; divorce itself is addressed as one of the effective factors in social disturbance and it often can cause irreversible damages to the community(4). On the other hand, many studies have confirmed the relationship of sexual conflicts and depression, eating disorders, other diseases such as cardiovascular disease and cancer, and they have emphasized on the existence of conflicts including the effects of sexual conflicts on physical, mental and familial health(5).

According to the warning statistic of divorce and its negative consequences and also dangers and vulnerabilities resulting from global, cultural and social changes in structure and function of family and the relation of couples, it is necessary that some actions are don to reduce the mental, emotional, behavioral and interactional disorders of family members especially couples. In this regard and also to prevent the increase of divorce and its negative consequences, one of the suitable ways to improve family relations, especially increasing the sexual satisfaction of couples as the principal pillar of the family is to do interventions to treat them by couple-therapists. System-behavioral couple therapy is one of these interventions. System-behavioral approach is an approach that the therapist applies it to change the process of interaction between the couple. There is this belief that such changes is suitable at the end of treatment and help the couple to solve their problems (6). This approach more emphasizes on improving the behavioral adjustment than a fundamental change in attitude or idea (7).

Based on this model, there are the two visual and allegorical stories behind the sexual behavior. In other words, according to the principles of the theory of systems, each communication itself is formed from a demanding layer and an informative (news) layer that sometimes the demanding layer appears and sometimes the imperative layer, in any way, when one layer appears, the another is hidden behind the message and its listener perceives it consciously or unconsciously(8). Briefly, the individual's behavior in connection with sexual relation should be studied both as an appeared behavior and as an expression of idea and reaction to it. So, the meaning of a behavior is understood depending on the context in which that behavior occurs. Based on this treatment model, the participation of individuals in an intimate relationship and continuing to participate in it is lasted as long as that relation is satisfactory in terms of rewards and costs. Based on this, sexual conflict is a function of rate of reinforcement and punishment (9).

(10) in a study entitled "The study of factors affecting the adjustment of the couples and comparing two interventional methods of changing life style and solving the family problems in reducing marital maladjustment" studied 1000 couples using Enrich test. The results showed that the interventional methods of changing life style and solving the family problems reduced the rate of the couples' maladjustment. (11) studied the impact of interventions of strategic family therapy in reducing couples' marital conflicts and concluded that this treatment approach in experimental group increases the rate of couples' marital satisfaction, solving the conflict and their relational problems; also this treatment method was more effective in women than men. (12) conducted a study under the title of "examination of the effectiveness of programs for improving relationship for the marital satisfaction in couples that both the husband and wife were employed in Education Organization or Health Organization in city of Shah rood". The sample size consisted of 24 couples and the results showed that the programs for improving relationship have significantly enhanced the total marital satisfaction and all its components (ideal change, marital satisfaction, financial management, communication, conflict resolution, relationships with family and friends, children and parenting, roles of egalitarianism, sexual relationship, religious orientation, leisure, coping with personal problems). The measuring tool in this study was Enrich test that its 12 subscales were measured and confirmed. (13) Studied a research entitled "the effect to couple therapy in short-term relationship on the communicative patterns of couples referring to the center of counseling and guidance of Khomeini Shahr Education organization". The results showed that this treatment method has a favorable impact on improving the couples' communicative patterns. Since the improvement of communicative patterns of couples is one of the factors that have the direct and important roles in increasing marital adjustment and satisfaction of couples, we can conclude that this treatment method has a positive effect on increasing the sexual satisfaction.

(2) Have conducted a study on 23 couples in the city of Shah rood to examine the effectiveness of systemic motivational counseling on reducing marital disturbance. The results showed that this treatment method has been capable to reduce the marital disturbance significantly. Also (14) examined the effect of group therapy on marital satisfaction and found the significant effect of this training method in experimental group comparing to control group. Similarly, (15) studied the effects of cognitive-behavioral family therapy on chronic fatigue disorder in 11-18 year old students and found that this approach is effective in treating chronic fatigue disorder. In this connection, (7) in their clinical studies and experiences concluded that the use of system-behavioral approach is effective for the treatment of many marital problems. So in order to reduce mental disorders and the divorce rate, to improve relationship between families and couples, especially to increase the couples' marital satisfaction, maintain mental health and strengthen the stability of families in facing current natural problems at different stages of the life cycle, doing such applied researches is felt as an urgent need. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore whether

system-behavioral couple therapy is effective in increasing the total marital satisfaction of couples referring to centers of psychological counseling and services of Qazvin province Education organization or not?

### EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

The research design used in this study was quasi-experimental with pretest and posttest and control group. The statistical population of this study is all couples referring to the centers of psychological counseling and services of Qazvin province Education organization in May 2012 for couple therapy that among them 20 couples were selected through available sampling and were divided into two experimental and control groups (10 couples for each group). The pretest was done for both groups by Enrich sexual satisfaction questionnaire, and then the experimental group was exposed to trainings of system-behavioral couple therapy for eight sessions and 60 minutes per each session, but the control group did not received any intervention. At the end of eight weeks of training couple therapy for experimental group, post-test was administered for both the experimental and control groups. T-test and analysis of covariance were used to analyze the data.

#### Measuring tools

**Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire:** This questionnaire was developed by Olson in 1989, and includes 47 self-reporting items. Each item includes 5-scale choices that range from 1 to 5. The higher the score, the greater the level of marital satisfaction will be. Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire has been reported by Olson equal to 0.92. (16) translate the marital satisfaction questionnaire and obtained its internal correlation equal to 0.95 in Cronbach's alpha method. Also, the reliability of the test was obtained equal to 0.95 in Cronbach's alpha method in the study of Soleimani. (17) obtained the reliability of the test in Cronbach's alpha method and half method 0.77 and 0.79 respectively. In the present study, the reliability was obtained equal to 0.87 in Cronbach's alpha method.

### RESULTS

**Table 1.1 Descriptive indicators of marital satisfaction variable in pre-test and post-test**

	Group index	Pre-test	Post-test	Variance of pretest and post-test
Experimental group	Mean	29.20	36.20	7
	Number	20	20	-
	Standard deviation	2.52	2.60	0.8
Control group	Mean	29.05	29.25	0.20
	Number	20	20	-
	Standard deviation	1.46	1.68	0.20

As table 1-1 shows, the mean of experimental group in pre-test is 29.20 and standard deviation is 2.52; the mean of this group in post-test is 36.20 and standard deviation is 2.60, but the mean of control group in pre-test is 29.05 and standard deviation is 1.46, and the mean of control group in post-test is 29.25. As we can observe the means of experimental group and control group in pre-test and the mean of control group in pre-test and post-test is too close and approximately identical; and only the mean of experimental group in post-test is higher the other means as much as 7 scores.

**Table 2.1 Results of independent t-test to compare the means of pretest for marital satisfaction in two groups**

Difference of pretest mean from post-test mean		Sig	$\alpha$	Degree of freedom	Calculated t
Experimental group	Control group				
-	0.20	0.001	0.05	38	10.01

**Table 3.1 Results of analysis of covariance of posttest scores in marital satisfaction**

Variance source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Sig
Group	1.281	1	1.281	1.488	0.231
Pre-test	113.014	1	113.014	131.210	0.000
Post-test group	2.569	1	2.569	0.030	0.864
Error	31.008	36	0.861		
Total	43503.000	36			

As shown in table 2-1, This hypothesis was studied using t-test to compare the means of two independent groups, and the experimental group has a mean difference of 7 and the control group has a mean difference of 0.20 and t-value calculated ( $t=10.01$ ) is higher than that's' of table ( $t=1.68$ ) with degree of freedom equal to 38 ( $df=38$ ) and level of significance equal to 0.001 ( $Sig=0.001$ ). Since the level of significance ( $Sig=0.001$ ) is lower than table's alpha ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), as a result the null hypothesis indicating non-significance of the variance between the means of control and experimental groups is rejected and the opposite hypothesis which indicate the significance of variance

between the means of control and experimental groups is confirmed. In other words, system-behavioral couple therapy is effective in total marital satisfaction of couples with 95% confidence.

As table 3-1 shows, the correlation of the pre-test (complementary random variable) and independent variable is not significant; so, after modifying the effect of means of pre-test, the effect of independent variable through comparing means of post-test \_\_as described in the above table\_\_ shows that the independent variable (system-behavioral couple therapy is effective in dependent variable (marital satisfaction). Consequently, one can say with 99% confidence that system-behavioral couple therapy is effective in couples' marital satisfaction ;and couple the rapists can use this treatment approach in similar circumstances in counseling couples.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of system-behavioral couple therapy on increasing marital satisfaction of couples referring to the centers of psychological counseling and services of Qazvin province Education organization. The sample consisted of 20 maladjusted couples that were selected through available sampling method and were divided into two experimental and control groups. Enrich sexual satisfaction questionnaire was administered for both the experimental and control groups as pre-test, and then the experimental group was exposed to trainings of system-behavioral couple therapy. Finally, post-test was administered for both the experimental and control groups and the following results were obtained. The most important finding of the study showed that system-behavioral couple therapy is effective in overall marital satisfaction of couples. The implication of this finding is that marital conflicts can be reduced by training system-behavioral couple therapy and the requirements of marital satisfaction of maladjusted couples can be provided. This finding is compatible with those of previous researches (7, 10-12, 14-15, 18-19).

(19) By studying the effect of teaching relational methods during marriage on marital satisfaction of a group of couples found that teaching communicative methods during marriage has a positive effect on marital satisfaction. Also (18) in a study compared the effects of behavioral-integrative couple therapy with those of traditional behavioral couple therapy. The results showed that the couples in the behavioral-integrative couple therapy group had sustainable improvement in marital satisfaction throughout the treatment period, while the couples in the traditional behavioral couple therapy group had rapid improvement in marital satisfaction at early stages of treatment compared to behavioral-integrative couple therapy group, but this improvement compared to integrative-behavioral couple therapy did not have a high continuity. Both treatment methods showed significant improvement in marital adjustment comparing to control group.

Therefore, this therapeutic approach, by teaching skills such as problem solving, assertive training, encouragement to increase flexibility, full responsibility for his/her behaviors, mutual dialogue between couples and reforming their relationship, justifying the privacy of personal boundaries and rebuilding loose and hard personal boundaries, and the explanation of subsystems in the family, helped couples that each of them actively try to maintain balance and stability of the system in a correct way, identify, accept and do mutual duties that couples and the other members have in lieu of each other; and based on this, achievement to the ultimate goal of treatment (increasing marital satisfaction) was provided through participation and cooperation of couples. Generally the reinforcement programs that lead to increase of efficacy of couples before the marriage and during common life after marriage such as teaching effective relationship, increasing the efficacy of relationship, preventing conflicts and discrepancies and increasing satisfaction have been considered very much (20)

In explaining the obtained results, it can be argued that several factors affect the marital satisfaction of which the appropriate resolution of conflicts, the appropriate contact, showing positive and negative emotions properly, lack of selfishness, existence of sympathy, decision making and accountability of couples and their knowledge toward each other can be mentioned. Since system- behavioral therapy techniques in this research, including technique of making confident, problem solving, empathy and cooperation, responsibility are closely related to the above factors, obtaining such results are not unexpected. Of limitations of this study are the statistical sample and sampling method that the caution should be done in generalizing the results. Also, it is suggested a further research is done to compare the effectiveness of this treatment approach with other theories couple therapy. Also it is recommended the efficacy of this method is tested in different treatment centers and other sections of the country.

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