The effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) on enhancement of communication skills in couples experiencing marital dissatisfaction

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Marriage is an important factor in the mental health of society. However, if marriage and family life lead to unpleasant situations, mental health will not be achieved and the such as negative and at times irredeemable effects such as mental disorders, depression and suicide will appear as a result of family dissatisfaction. Therefore, mental health is subject to appropriate marital relationship and marriage reinforcement (Olson & Defrain, 2006). While marriage seems to be a highly desirable relationship, statistics indicate that marital satisfaction is not easily achieved. According to divorce statistics, it is estimated that between 40-50 percent of first marriages in the United States and 24.3 percent in Iran end in divorce (Rosen-Gardon et al., 2004). According to statistics marriages ending in divorce have almost quadrupled in Iran in the last 20 years. A majority of psychologists and sociologists interpret these changes as signs of trouble and collapse in Iranian families, and they reiterate that the increasing rate of divorce is one cause of many social and moral aberrations in Iranian society (Azarnamaki, 2005; Kousha & Mohseni, 2000). The general purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of CBT to enhance communication skills of couples experiencing marital dissatisfaction among Iranian couples. Researchers state that many aspects of communication influence marital satisfaction. For example Snyder (1997) addresses ten areas that effect marital dissatisfaction. This study focused on the following eight areas; Affective Communication (AFC), Problem-Solving Communication (PSC), Aggression (AGG), Time Together (TTO), Sexual dissatisfaction (SEX), Disagreement about Finances (FIN), Role Orientation (JOR), and Conflict over Child Rearing (CCR). The researcher employed a case study design based on the topic, purposes and the research questions of the study. The case study design was also utilized for data collection, analysis and interpretation in this study. The sample of this study comprised ten couples who were referred as clients to family therapy centers in Iran. The appropriate sampling technique for this type of study was purposeful sampling. In order to gain better understanding of characteristics of couples, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire after registration. After filling out the questionnaire, the participants were screened and ten couples were selected. Subsequently, couples who agreed to participate were exposed to the (CBCT) for thirteen to eighteen sessions for decreasing marital dissatisfaction. All sessions lasted approximately one hour and a half and were held in a weekly fashion. Data were gathered from both spouses using three sources: Interview and Observation, Documents, and Questionnaires and Inventories. The finding of this study was that (CBCT) had great influences on decreasing marital dissatisfaction and enhancing the levels of marital satisfaction in Iranian couples. However, it did not have the same influence on all eight fields of marital satisfaction in all couples. The (CBCT) influence was high in decreasing GDS, AFC, PSC, TTO, SEX, and FIN scores of couples. The impact of (CBCT) in decreasing the AGG and CCR scores of couples was lower, and did not influence the ROR scores of couples at all. Marital dissatisfaction was associated with psychological disorders. Most couples had one psychological disorder. The prevalence of extra marital sexual relationship among couples was high and this phenomenon was considerably associated with marital dissatisfaction. Couples frequently used reciprocated negative behavior to balance each other’s behavior, which in turn resulted in hostile and obstinate behavior between them.

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