

# Investigating the Relationship between the Conflict Resolution Skills among Couples on the Level of Marital Conflict and Their Mental Health (Case Study: Centers of Psychological and Counseling Services of Qaemshahr City)

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The aim of this study was to investigating the relationship between the conflict resolution skills among couples on the level of marital conflict and their mental health in the centers of psychological and counseling services of Qaemshahr city. **Methodology:** The sample under investigation was 30 pairs of volunteers (30 men and 30 women) from the centers of psychology and life counseling services of Qaemshahr city, which uses simple random method assigned to two experimental and control groups. The research tool was the marital conflicts questionnaire of Barati and Sanaee, and general health questionnaire (GHQ) of Goldberg and Hillier. In this study, the training group people participated in 10 one-hour session on conflict resolution skills training classes. Methodology of this study was an experimental type with designing pretest, posttest and follow-up with control group. **Results:** The results of the study showed that a significant difference in reducing marital conflict and enhance couples mental health between the experimental and control groups. **Conclusion:** The results are indicate that the amount of independent T, obtained from the difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups at the level of 95%, and with 29 degrees of freedom and statistically is significant, and this means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted. This means that with 95% certainty, we can say that the teaching conflict resolution skills in couples in the experimental group could make a significant difference between the scores of marital conflict of this group of couples and the control group.

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## 1. Introduction

The marriage is entering a new phase of life, which is the very important part of personal and social life of each person. How to start and forming relationships is effective on the behavior and their subsequent collisions, and can put a positive or negative influence spouses and children, hence, the quality of the marital relationship, not only affect on the level of mental health, but also in children's mental health and other social roles. In most psychological damage, even disturbances that have been proven role of genetic factors was raised traces of the impact of poor families. Therefore, investigating and addressing the contributing factors in marital satisfaction can have a major role in the prevention of future damage. Generally, couples that have good communication skills with together, in addition to that having the ability to problem-solving, they are faced with less marital conflicts, also they have higher marital satisfaction and they feel more fun with your relationships, and as a result, they are not projective their conflicts to children.

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Family is the most fundamental of social organization and the main social component. Achieving a healthy society is dependent on family health and achieves a healthy family to enjoy its people than mental health, and having a good relationship with each other, as well as, family is the most important factor in personality development to individual age of six years old (Sadock & Caplan, 2003).

Conflict is often the reason for wives for treatment. Couples is possible, because refer to the therapist, who cannot be together and that they are unhappy or depressed of life. Conflict in human relationships with each other is a common and unavoidable. Conflict is a phenomenon that comes along with love in marital relationship and it is unavoidable. Conflict, when it comes to that an individual's actions interferes with another person's actions, as the two people closer together increasing the force of conflict. The conflict between members of the family is detrimental to the unity and integrity. Intensity conflict causes hypocrisy and aggression and aggression, and finally, disintegration and decline of the family. Family focus, which is disturbed as a result of conflict and division and conflict between the couple leave devastating effects on children and family life of children, which in the coming years, it appears to be disobedience and rebellion of regulation social. (Kew-Ching, 1996). Such as puzzles in the marital relationship that is, why the love that can reach to the peak is discounting and be hidden behind the cloud of despair and desolation. Many couples, who expect to have good life and their work pulled to blame and live in a state of malaise. Why wives and husbands, who had already agreed on everything, now, do not compromise on anything. How is it that the couple, of awakening reach to the illusion, of fascination reach to dislike, and of satisfaction reaches to dissatisfaction. (Beck Aaron, 1994). Although, in the early days of marriage, the men and women providing permanent commitment towards one another, but the reality in some cases, it is the other way. Family experts investigations have shown about half of couples assess fail their marriage and this lack of success may be the result of marital conflict.

Increasing marital conflicts in the contemporary world and the risk of separation and its negative effect on couples's mental health and their children has led to consultants and family therapists provide theories and plans to help couples conflict, which one of them was to teach conflict resolution skills. One of the effective ways to solve problems and marital conflicts and prevent marital distress and divorce is skills training, that is marriage enrichment programs. This training is used for the spouses and families that are in need of help, especially in areas of lovemaking act. Studies show that use of training programs is effective in preventing divorce and improve the relationship. This program is effective for all partners, both those that are newly married and those, who years ago of marriage. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to prevent marital distress, destructive conflicts, divorce, and also help to spouses that they can use methods of conflict skills in problematic situations and with good behavioral practices resolve the inevitable conflicts in their relationship.

According to the mentioned consequences arising from family conflicts and the importance of health and mental hygiene in the family, the main question is, how much is beneficial the conflict resolution skills program? Do teaching these skills to couples is effective in conflict mitigation and enhancement of mental health?

## ***1.2 Literature***

### ***1.2.1 Marital conflict***

Couples and families are different than other human groups in many ways such as the duration, intensity and type of operation. In human beings, the family is where we experience the greatest love or hatred in it, or enjoying from the deepest satisfaction, and suffering from the deepest pain. In families, the performance of one member affects on the whole family. Family is a system with balanced dynamics. Stresses and struggles of family life, inevitably, impact on individual members. When the entire system or a portion thereof is faced with imbalance, the system operates in order to restore it to the previous balance. The marital conflict is a negative emotional state, which arise due to disability in at least one of the two goals compatible and incompatible. In other words, marital conflict occurs when each of the two sides can not least choose one of two ways uncompromising (Miller et al., 2006).

### ***1.2.2 Mental health***

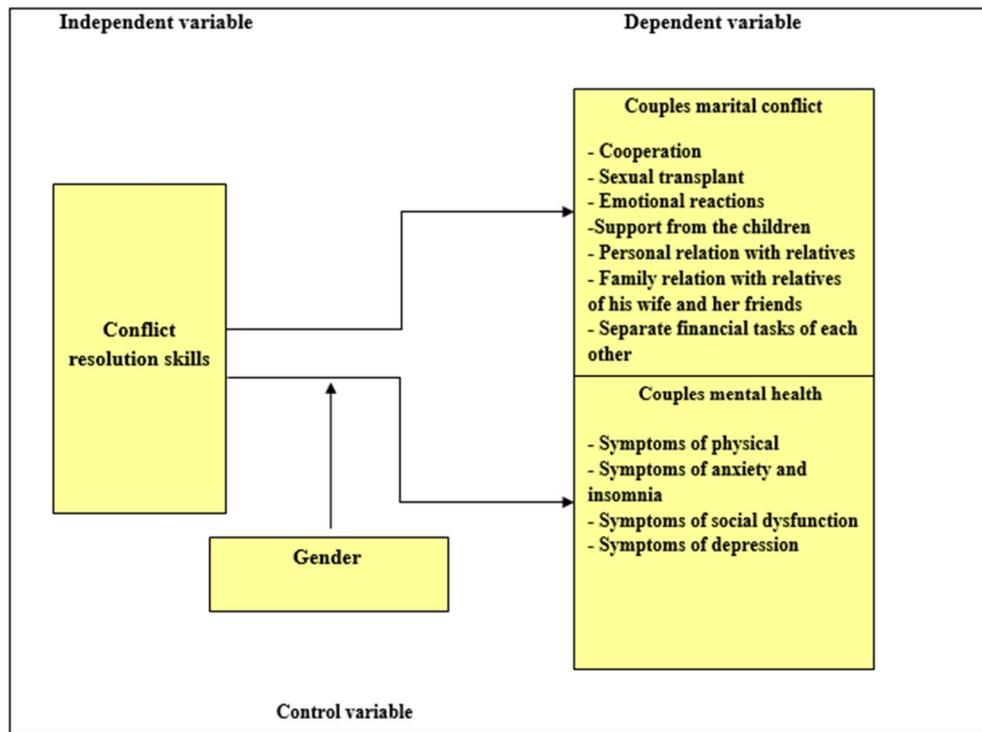
A state of calm, where the person known their personal abilities can cope with the life normal stresses could have efficiency and developing employment and is capable of having an important role in society. Various authors have offered different definitions of mental health. This variation in definitions could be caused by the difference of the various approaches in psychology and different authors believe to a variety of components that exist in relation to mental health and in some cases are achieved by the results of some studies. Health is quality of life, which it definition is a problem and it is almost impossible the actual measurement. Experts have offered numerous definitions of this concept, but almost all definitions have a common thread and it is responsibility about their and choices healthy lifestyle.

### ***1.2.3 Conflict resolution skills***

The term conflict is one of the concepts that to be understood that various meanings. According to emphasize that are on the decision-making process and to solve the problem, defined the conflict as a failure in the standard decision-making mechanisms, to so that through it, the person when selecting a practical solution to act is having problems. Thompson has defined conflict constitutes behavior that, who do in opposition to the other. Conflict resolution skills are dealing with the methods of constructive conflict resolution and familiarity with conflict resolution skills in family life and the concept of conflict and attitude to it in family life. These skills are a set of capabilities that provide compatibility and positive and helpful attitude. These abilities enable a person to accept their responsibilities and social role and without hurting yourself and others faced effectively with the demands and expectations and daily problems, especially in interpersonal relationships (Miller et al., 2006).

### ***1.2.4 Conceptual framework***

According to theoretical principles, the conceptual model is as follows:



*Fig.1. Conceptual model*

### 1.2.5 Research history

- Fatehizadeh (2010) in a study entitled "Effect of emotionally focused couple therapy on marital compatibility" conducted to investigate the impact of emotionally focused couple therapy on increasing marital compatibility. The results showed that emotionally focused couple therapy is to increase the compatibility of their marital disturbed. Results also showed that, although the follow-up phase still scores marital therapy group was higher than the control group, but there was no significant difference between treatment and control groups at posttest until not confirmed pursuit and the continuity of results during the time.

- Barati (1996) conducted a study aimed to determine the effectiveness of education of marital enrichment on increasing intimacy in couples. Part of the enrichment program was conflict resolution training and problem solving. The results of this study revealed that marital enrichment programs increase intimacy, emotional, intellectual, psychological, social and recreational.

- Halford (2003), in their study examined the effect of communication skills training and found that communication training is effective on reduce the spread and the emergence of marital distress and divorce.

- Lange Barends and Van der Ende (1998), in a program to reduce the suction cache wives to 28 couples in three training sessions gave assignments to increase restraint and also showing adaptive thoughts and emotions. The results showed that wives to be meaningful had progress in controlling their anger.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1 Research methodology

#### 2.1.1 Research hypotheses

Conflict resolution skills are effective on reduce couples marital conflict.

Conflict resolution skills are effective on increase couples mental health.

#### 2.1.2 Statistical Population

The population of this research is included couples, who due to marital discord from May to late July 2014, referred to psychology and life advice service centers of Qaemshahr city and is a maximum of one year from the date of their marriage. Research sample composed of 30 couples (30 men and 30 women) from the center of psychology and counseling service life of Qaemshahr city that the score of mental health and marital conflicts is more than the rest. Selected samples using randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups.

### 2.1.3 Methods and tools for data collection

To select a sample from the target population, the researcher visiting psychology and life advice service centers of Qaemshahr city and has studied the different cases of couples. Then, to determine the dates of their visit, researcher present in couple of hours and after introducing himself by giving marital conflict questionnaire, they insisted that to complete the questionnaire. Then they collected all the completed questionnaires and calculated their score conflict. Then between the couples, the couples, who had the highest score contradictions and meanwhile were interested in attending in meetings conflict resolution skills, set up an appointment by the researcher with them. In the dates fixed and the presence of the couple formed the first orientation session and on how education is explained to them. Meetings are held on a weekly basis and after random selection of the experimental and control groups to be implemented conflict resolution skills training for the experimental group and if there is no intervention to control group. Experimental programs have been set, according to educational topics carried out in 10 one-hour session for experimental groups. After the training sessions and over a period of two weeks after the last training session run the posttest.

### 2.1.4 Description of the meeting is as follows

At their first session, after getting familiar members of the group spoken about the purpose of the program, the importance of the marital relationship, the effects of marital conflict on mental health and physical spouses and children.

In the second session, be discussion about the concept of conflict and ways to resolve them (competition, abstinence, reconciliation, harmony and cooperation), and asked the participants to review their conflict and think of ways to solve it.

In the third session, with study dysfunctional interactive patterns (criticism, blame, entrenchment and silence), spoken about efficient interaction patterns and to play a role in the case of a negative and positive interaction.

At the fourth session, to be explained on empathy, importance and its methods and in this context, is the task to the group.

In the fifth session, will be discussed to the skills of listening and speaking and then patterning in the case of an act of doing.

In the sixth session, training and instruction in problem-solving steps and practice in the field.

Seventh session, non-verbal or physical behavior.

Eighth session, training and practice, practice of expressing emotions and desires.

Ninth session, learning and practicing of suppression of anger.

Tenth session, ways to increase intimacy and sexual bond and respond to participants' questions, always contact during meetings are asked from the participants that what was said in the classes, practice at home and introduce books to them and asked of them that they study this book.

## 3. Discussion and results

### 3.1 Findings

In this study, we use of descriptive statistical and inferential statistics methods to analyze the obtained data. At the descriptive level, by using statistical characteristics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, addressed to describe the population and to test the hypothesis, we used of the t-test and Levene test. For statistical analysis in this study, we used of the SPSS software.

*Table1. T-test for variables after training*

Dimension	T-test					
	Population Mean	Number	Mean	t	df	Sig
Marital conflicts	126	30	139.4333	4.895	29	0.000
Reducing the cooperation	15	30	17.4667	4.218	29	0.000
Reducing the sexual relationship	15	30	17.6667	5.553	29	0.000
Increasing emotional reactions	24	30	27.0667	4.593	29	0.000
Increasing recruitment of child support	15	30	14.7333	-0.396	29	0.695
Increasing personal relationship with your relatives	18	30	21.4000	7.999	29	0.000
Reducing family relationship with the partner's relatives and friends	18	30	18.3333	0.621	29	0.539
Finances separate from each other	21	30	22.7667	2.614	29	0.014
Mental health	42	30	60.8000	21.068	29	0.000
Symptoms of physical	10.5	30	14.7333	14.729	29	0.000
Symptoms of anxiety and insomnia	10.5	30	13.6667	7.609	29	0.000
Symptoms of social dysfunction	10.5	30	16.6333	18.004	29	0.000
Symptoms of depression	10.5	30	17.5665	22.300	29	0.000

According to table 1, for variable of marital conflict after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of marital conflict after training course (among the control group) is severe or relationships are extremely vulnerable.

According to table 1, for the variable of reducing the cooperation after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of reducing the cooperation after training course (among the control group) is high.

According to table 1, for the variable of reducing sexual relationship after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of reducing sexual relationship after training course (among the control group) is high. According to table 1, for the variable of increasing emotional reactions after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of increasing emotional reactions after training course (among the control group) is high. According to table 1, for the variable of increasing recruitment of child support after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to 0.695, which is more than 0.05, so it is not rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of increasing recruitment of child support after training course (among the control group) is moderate. According to table 1, for the variable of increase personal relationship with your relatives after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of increase personal relationship with your relatives after training course (among the control group) is high. According to table 1, for the variable of reducing the family relationship with the partner's relatives and friends after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to 0.539, which is more than 0.05, so it is not rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of reducing the family relationship with the partner's relatives and friends after training course (among the control group) is moderate. According to table 1, for the variable of separate the finances of each other after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to 0.014, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of separate the finances of each other after training course (among the control group) is high. According to table 1, for the variable of mental health after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of mental health after training course (among the control group) is high which is indicative of the lack of adequate mental health. According to table 1, for the variable of symptoms of physical after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of symptoms of physical after training course (among the control group) is high. According to table 1, for the variable of symptoms of anxiety and insomnia after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of symptoms of anxiety and insomnia after training course (among the control group) is high.

According to table 1, for the variable of symptoms of impairment in social functioning after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of symptoms of impairment in social functioning after training course (among the control group) is high.

According to table 1, for the variable of symptoms of depression after training course (among the control group), the amount of sig is equal to zero, which is less than 0.05, so it is rejected the H0 hypotheses, in other words, the mean of symptoms of depression after training course (among the control group) is high.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics**

Group		Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Marital conflicts	Control	30	139.4333	15.03257
	Experimental	30	95.1667	8.72999
Reducing the cooperation	Control	30	17.4667	3.20273
	Experimental	30	10.8667	1.61316
Reducing the sexual relationship	Control	30	17.6667	2.63050
	Experimental	30	11.4000	2.49966
Increasing emotional reactions	Control	30	27.0667	3.65715
	Experimental	30	18.7333	1.7998144
Increasing recruitment of child support	Control	30	14.7333	3.68532
	Experimental	30	11.0000	3.028602
Increasing personal relationship with your relatives	Control	30	21.4000	2.32824
	Experimental	30	13.2000	2.10746
Reducing family relationship with the partner's relatives and friends	Control	30	18.3333	2.94001
	Experimental	30	14.2333	1.95965
Finances separate from each other	Control	30	22.7667	3.70166
	Experimental	30	15.7337	2.76597
Mental health	Control	30	60.8000	4.88770
	Experimental	30	38.3000	3.65919
Symptoms of physical	Control	30	14.7333	1.57422
	Experimental	30	10.3333	1.84453
Symptoms of anxiety and insomnia	Control	30	13.6667	2.27934
	Experimental	30	10.3000	1.68462
Symptoms of social dysfunction	Control	30	16.6333	1.86591

	Experimental	30	9.7333	2.31834
Symptoms of depression	Control	30	17.5667	1.73570
	Experimental	30	9.4667	1.47936

Table 2 shows the number, mean, and standard deviation of marital conflict and mental health and their dimensions, in the control and the experimental group after the training.

**Table 3. Analysis of Levene test and t-test**

		Levene test		T-test	
		F-statistic	sig	T-statistic	sig
Marital conflicts	Variances are equal	8.723	0.005	13.948	0.000
	Variances are not equal			13.948	0.000
Reducing the cooperation	Variances are equal	9.226	0.004	10.081	0.000
	Variances are not equal			10.081	0.000
Reducing the sexual relationship	Variances are equal	0.067	0.797	9.459	0.000
	Variances are not equal			9.459	0.000
Increasing emotional reactions	Variances are equal	9.878	0.003	11.222	0.000
	Variances are not equal			11.222	0.000
Increasing recruitment of child support	Variances are equal	1.754	0.191	4.287	0.000
	Variances are not equal			4.287	0.000
Increasing personal relationship with your relatives	Variances are equal	0.349	0.557	14.302	0.000
	Variances are not equal			14.302	0.000
Reducing family relationship with the partner's relatives and friends	Variances are equal	5.694	0.020	6.356	0.000
	Variances are not equal			6.356	0.000
Finances separate from each other	Variances are equal	3.492	0.067	8.337	0.000
	Variances are not equal			8.337	0.000
Mental health	Variances are equal	1.674	0.201	20.184	0.000
	Variances are not equal			20.184	0.000
Symptoms of physical	Variances are equal	0.742	0.393	9.938	0.000
	Variances are not equal			9.938	0.000
Symptoms of anxiety and insomnia	Variances are equal	2.707	0.105	6.506	0.000
	Variances are not equal			6.506	0.000
Symptoms of social dysfunction	Variances are equal	0.028	0.868	12.699	0.000
	Variances are not equal			12.699	0.000
Symptoms of depression	Variances are equal	1.545	0.219	19.453	0.000
	Variances are not equal			19.453	0.000

According to table 3, the amount of sig for the variables of marital conflict, reducing the cooperation, increasing emotional reactions and reducing family relationship with the partner's relatives and friends in Levene test is less than 0.05, which indicates that for this variables, the variances are not equal and for other variables, the Levene test is more than 0.05, and is not rejected the null hypothesis. This means that the variances are equal. Thus, according to the amount of T-statistic and sig, which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected for all the variables, ie, there are differences between the two groups of control and experimental after the training.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results indicate that the amount of independent T, obtained from the difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups at the level of 95%, and with 29 degrees of freedom and statistically is significant, and this means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted. This means that with 95% certainty, we can say that the teaching conflict resolution skills in couples in the experimental group could make a significant difference between the scores of marital conflict of this group of couples and the control group. As well as, the amount of independent T, obtained from the difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups at the level of 95%, and with 29 degrees of freedom and statistically is significant, and this means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted. This means that with 95% certainty, we can say that the teaching conflict resolution skills in couples in the experimental group could make a significant difference between the scores of mental health of this group of couples and the control group.

The results show that the conflict resolution skills program has been able generally causes reducing conflicts between divorced spouses and increasing their mental health. This finding are consistent with findings of Sanaee Zaker (1999) based on the combined effect of problem-solving program with communication training in reducing marital distress. The results of this study are consistent with findings of Moradi (2000), Sanaee Zaker (1999) Barati (1996), Halford et al (2003), Dayas et al (2003) and Miller et al (2006), which believe that the conflict resolution skills program is effective on attitudinal and behavioral couples aspects and mental health. This finding is also consistent with the ideas of Fincham and Beach (1999) who believe that communication skills training teach the person how to be constructive to pay to solve problems.

#### 4.1 Suggestions

- It is suggested that this research, carried out in other communities and compare the results with each other.
- It is suggested that this research, carried out with a broader age range to study the effect of other variables on psychological well-being.
- According to the research that has been done and the positive effects of conflict resolution skills on the fate of the couple and has proved its success, it is suggested that by putting workshops for couples as a families education, be taught to them to increasing the increase psychological well-being and growth in the couples.

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