

Efficacy of training through Emotion-Focused Therapy on Marital Passion

Zahra Ghaderi¹ Zhale Refahi¹ Mohammad Baghban²

Assistant Professor Department of Counseling¹, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch, Marvdasht, Iran. PhD Student of Counseling², Young Researchers and Elite Club, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch, Marvdasht, Iran.

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Original Article

Abstract

Introduction: This study set out to investigate the efficacy of training through emotion-focused therapy (EFT) on the improvement of marital passion.

Methods: This is a quasi-experimental study with a pre- and post-test design, and experimental and control groups. The statistical population included all couples living in Bandar Abbas. In general 185 couples enrolled to participate in the research. The sample size comprised 20 subjects in the experimental group and 20 subjects in the control group, selected from 97 couples who gained low scores in the Love Component Scale (LCS). The Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale, or Sternberg's Love Components Scale, as well as Demographic Inventory were used for data collection. Data was analyzed using ANOVA and independent t-test.

Results: Findings indicate that the focus on emotions and attachment styles can alter marital passion in couples. In addition, the RFT has positive significant effect on the improvement of marital passion ($P < 0.0005$).

Conclusion: These findings show that the development of a safe attachment style and identification of initial and secondary emotions in a training process not only fade negative interactions, but also improves marital passion.

Key words: Love Components, Emotion-Focused Approach, Marital Passion

Correspondence:

Mohammad Baghban,
PhD Student.
Young Researchers and Elite
Club Islamic Azad University,
Marvdasht Branch.
Marvdasht, Iran
Tel: +98 9191045205
Email:
ya.raoof@yahoo.com

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Introduction:

People marry for different reasons. In addition to sexual passions, as a primary cause, love, economic and emotional securities, protection, sense of comfort, and escape from loneliness trigger drive for marriage (1).

According to Sternberg, marital passion is based on sexual motives and physical attractiveness (2). Marital passion refers to a passionate and enthusiastic drive that direct human towards love, physical attractiveness, sexual destination, dependencies, and love phenomena in relationships.

The components of passion include a territory of motivational sources and other types of motivations that direct the person towards experiencing desire, passion, and enthusiasm in romantic relations. In a romantic relationship, sexual needs may be well experienced (3). The emotion-based approach is a short-term systematic model that combines interpsychological and interpersonal areas. This approach is based on humanistic and existential psychotherapy, which is theoretically founded on Shaver's Adult Love Theory, and Bolby's Clinical Attachment Styles, and Gottman's Marital Distress Concepts (4-8). Ficher & Moore showed that

attachment styles (safe, anxious, and avoidant) are correlated with arousal levels, and sexual pleasure and satisfaction. They said that a decrease in sexual relationship puts attachment at risk to the extent that a safe attachment affects mental perceptions, and the understanding of sexual arousal and attractiveness. This is because the development of a safe attachment allows couples easily share their sexual demands and accompany sexual relationships with romantic relationships. In contrast, unsafe attachment causes distance and lack of intimacy, inadequate sense of self-efficacy, and negative beliefs about marital relationships. These negative phenomena reduce the chance of reaching orgasm. In addition, people with an avoidant pattern of attachment tend to short-term sexual relationships and fail in building a sexual intimacy with their spouses (5, 9-11). Several studies have proven the effectiveness of emotion-focus therapy among couples in the improvement of sexual relationships and satisfaction.

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of training through emotion-focused therapy (EFT) in the improvement of marital passion.

Methods:

This was a quasi-experimental study with pre- and post-test design, and experimental and control groups. The statistical population included all couples living in Bandar Abbas. This study was

conducted in the 2013-2014 school year. In this study, the purposive sampling technique was used through which parents of primary and middle school students were called to participate in the study. The enrollment of volunteers was done in the schools. In total, 185 couples were enrolled and completed the questionnaires. Then, 40 out of 97 eligible couples who gained low scores in this scale were randomly selected. After matching and homogenizing them (in terms of the length of marriage, educational level, number of children, and employment status), they were divided into two 20-member groups, namely control and experimental (taking equal variances into account). The experimental group received eight 1.5-hour EFT training sessions, once per week. Educational topics were predefined and the sessions were held in an educational setting. Meanwhile, the control group did not receive any intervention. After the completion of all eight sessions, questionnaires were administered to both groups for the second time. Data analysis was done with linear regression and ANOVA at the significance level of 0.005, using SPSS 19.

In addition, the t-test was used to obtain the paired relation. Before the study, the informed consent forms were completed by the participants and all ethical principals were observed throughout the study.

Training Protocol of RFT (5-15)

Row	Session	Objective
2	Second	Review of tasks - training the third and fourth steps of EFT (gaining access to unknown and hidden emotions in interactive settings - reframing the problem based on hidden emotional interactions and attachment needs).
3	Third	Review of tasks - Practicing the learned skills
4	Fourth	Review of tasks - Training the fifth and sixth steps of EFT (identifying denied attachment needs, aspects of self, and combination of these needs with relational interactions - improving the acceptance of new structure of the spouses' experiences and interactive responses of couples to each other)
5	Fifth	Review of tasks - Training the seventh step of EFT (facilitating the expression of needs and demands, and creation of emotional involvements)
6	Sixth	Review of tasks - Practicing the learned skills
7	Seventh	Review of tasks - Training the eighth and ninth steps of EFT (developing new solutions for old problems - strengthening the position of new responses)
8	Eighth	Conclusion - Training the learned skills - General evaluation
2	Second	Review of tasks - training the third and fourth steps of EFT (gaining access to unknown and hidden emotions in interactive settings - reframing the problem based on hidden emotional interactions and attachment needs).

Measurement Instrument:

The Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale was developed to investigate and evaluate the structure of love on the basis of intimacy, passion, and commitment. This scale comprises 45 items that assess three components of love. The first, second, and third 15 items measure intimacy, passion, and commitment, respectively. Each item is scored on a 1-9 scale that included three definitions ("not at all," "on average," "completely"). Then, the total score of each group (comprising 15 members) is written in front of each group. The best scores are given to those who score higher than average in all three groups. The difference between groups in scores of each trait indicates the strength of that trait in a certain group. Poor and strong scores indicate that the sides of the love triangle are not consistent (15).

Sternberg obtained the correlation of 0.21-0.62 for these sub-scales. In addition, the internal consistency of sub-scales was high and correlation coefficient of the overall test was obtained as 0.90 (16). Ghomrani and Sadat-Jafar-Tabatabae (2006) obtained the reliability of the Scale, using Cronbach's alpha method (0.92) (17). In addition, they obtained the validities of 0.66, 0.92, and 0.77 for intimacy, passion, and commitment, respectively ($P < 0.001$) through the measurement of correlation of all components and the total score of the scale. In this study, the reliability of the Scale was obtained as 0.91, using the Cronbach's alpha.

Results:

The mean and standard deviation of the obtained scores in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1.

According to above table, the significance level of ANOVA and F were obtained as 0.0005 and 138, respectively. After the removal of pre-test effect, a significant between-groups difference was observed in the post-test. According to the results, the effect of EFT training on passion among women was significant at the level of 1%. Moreover, Eta factor (0.793) showed that almost 80% of the observed differences in passion among women in the post-test were due to the effect of EFT training. In conclusion, the EFT training is capable of increasing passion in women.

According to above table, significance level of ANOVA and F value were obtained 0.0005 and 125, respectively. After the removal of pre-test effect, a significant between-groups difference was observed in the post-test. According to the results, the effect of EFT training on passion among men was significant at the level of 1%. Moreover, Eta factor (0.776) showed that almost 78% of the observed differences in passion among men in the post-test were due to the effect of EFT training. In conclusion, the EFT training is capable of increasing passion in men.

The mean and standard deviation of changes in pre-test and post-test scores in passion among couples is presented in Table 4. Differences between these scores were not significant.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of experimental and control groups in passion among man and woman

Variable	Group	Number (person)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Passion among women	Casae	20	122	4.9
	Control	20	51.4	10.2
Passion among men	Case	20	125.4	5
	Control	20	52.8	10.8

Table 2. ANOVA result for passion among women in both groups

Source of changes	Total squares	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean squares	Test statistics (F)	Significance Level (sig)	Eta
Pretest effect	554	1	554	21	0.0005	0.369
EFT training effect	3634.4	1	3634.4	138	0.0005	0.793
Error	947.6	36	26.3			
Corrected total	52316.4	39				

Table 3. ANOVA result for passion among men in both groups

Source of changes	Total squares	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean squares	Test statistics (F)	Significance Level (sig)	Eta
Pretest effect	637.2	1	637.2	17	0.0005	0.322
EFT training effect	4663.4	1	4663.4	125	0.0005	0.776
Error	1342.4	36	37.2			
Corrected total	55443.6	39				

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of changes in pre-test and post-test scores in passion among couples (both man and woman)

Row	Variable	Group	Number (person)	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-value
	Passion	Male	20	71.2	11.5	0.774
		Female	20	72.1	9	

Conclusion:

Results showed that training through EFT had significant positive effect on the marital passion of couples. These findings are consistent with the findings of Ficher and Moore, Goldman, Javidi et al., Honarparvaran et al., (12-14).

Findings concerning the components of love in the area of sexual passion are consistent with the findings of the present study. For example, Ficher and Moore showed that the attachment styles are correlated with the levels of arousal, pleasure, and sexual satisfaction. Goldman (2005) reported significant effectiveness of EFT in sexual satisfaction and marital relationship. These findings indicated that sexual satisfaction compensates for negative impacts or poor relationships among couples, and has important effect on marital satisfaction. Javidi et al. (2012) and Honarparvaran et al. (2010) found that the effectiveness of EFT training in sexual satisfaction was positive and significant (12-14).

Honarparvaran (2012) puts that the main objective of EFT interventions is to change initial avoidance patterns in interactions and create a space for realization of feelings and sexual passions (5).

In this study, researcher found that the expression of underlying feelings about marital passion discovers and reveals previous attachment traumas and improves safe attachment. This per se increases the frequency of sexual intercourse, positive sexual experiments, and sexual satisfaction in marital relations.

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