

# The effectiveness of integrated couple therapy training on commitment, intimacy, individual and interpersonal forgiveness in couples with marital boredom

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## Abstract

Marital boredom is one of the essential components in couples' relationships, the existence of which causes adverse effects on couples and families. In this regard, integrated couple therapy as an almost new approach solves their problems by addressing the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral contexts in couples' communication problems. Therefore, the present study aims to study the effectiveness of this approach on improving marital intimacy, marital commitment, and individual and interpersonal forgiveness of couples with marital boredom. Method: This quasi-experimental study is a pre-test-post-test with a control group. For this purpose, 20 teams referred to Ibn Sina Hospital's counseling center in Mashhad in 1399 were selected by available sampling method and were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The Pines Marital Boredom Scale, the Marital Commitment Questionnaire of Rost Belt et al., The Sanai Marital Intimacy Questionnaire, the Individual Forgiveness Questionnaire of Ray et al., And the Ehteshamzadeh Interpersonal Forgiveness Questionnaire were used in both pre-test and post-test. The experimental group members participated in 8 sessions of 90-minute treatment, and the other group members (control group) did not receive any treatment. One-way analysis of covariance was used to analyze the data. Results: The results showed that combined couple therapy training had improved the level of marital intimacy, marital commitment, and individual and interpersonal forgiveness. Therefore, the implemented interventions can help improve the situation of couples with marital boredom through cognitive, behavioral, and emotional reconstructions.

**Keywords:** Marital boredom, Marital commitment, Marital intimacy, Individual forgiveness, Interpersonal forgiveness, Couple therapy

## Introduction

Couples who have minimal satisfaction in their married life; While being satisfied with the personality traits of their partner and accompanying them to solve life problems, they are satisfied and satisfied with their marital and sexual life (1). In married life, emotions are exchanged between a man and a woman, and both try to understand each other. As soon as they realize the challenge of marital satisfaction, by expressing their feelings to their spouse, they encourage them to satisfy marital satisfaction

through Applying an empathetic perspective and conveying positive emotions (2). With couples' failure to communicate effectively with each other, intimacy and mutual commitment decrease, which leads to marital boredom (3). Boredom in any marital relationship means a negative and unsatisfactory attitude that a couple has from different aspects of their marital relationship (4).

Intimacy is the effort to be close, similar, and have a personal relationship based on love and the deep respect with another person, which

requires deep knowledge and understanding of the relationship and its inner feelings (5). Intimacy expresses the feeling of closeness and an emotional personal relationship with another person, which as an interactive process includes related dimensions. Its axis is based on gaining knowledge and empathy with the other person's feelings and accepting his point of view (6). also intimacy increases marital compatibility and satisfaction by increasing the stability and strength of relationships (7). Evidence suggests that marital intimacy is also a significant predictor of marital commitment (8). Therefore, marital commitment and intimacy are a vital part of any successful marriage (9). Marital commitment is the sense of continuity and attitude of the individual about how secure he feels in the current relationship and how much he feels valued for the relationship in which he is in the long run (10).

Interpersonal forgiveness is another essential and influential variable in creating compatibility and reducing marital conflict between couples. It has been found that there is a negative relationship between forgiveness and marital conflicts, such as emotional divorce and marital boredom (11). Forgiveness is a process of psychological-emotional liberation that occurs inside the offended person and frees him from the kind of anger, rage, and fear he feels so that he no longer desires revenge and goes through the atmosphere of reparation (12).

Interpersonal forgiveness of a couple arises when one of the spouses causes dissatisfaction and harassment to the other side of the family by his actions or words (13). More forgiveness is associated with more incredible warmth and intimacy, satisfaction, and commitment in couples (14).

Today, the efforts of family professionals to promote intimacy and respect between couples are increasing day by day (15). One of the tools to prevent the escalation of marital dissatisfaction and conflict resolution is to use couple therapy to educate and strive to improve couples' relationships, develop empathy and intimacy, and develop effective communication and problem-solving skills (16). One of the most widely used therapies is couple therapy.

This approach is based on therapies that are used to solve couples' relationship problems and targets problems that can result from cognitive

distortions and a lack of skills needed to understand the issues realistically.  $\neg$  Be (17). The goal of integrated couple therapy is emotional acceptance by releasing vulnerable emotions that enhance empathy and enable behavior change (18).

Many studies show the effectiveness of integrated behavioral therapy on modulating emotions and improving interactive patterns (19), intimacy (20) and constructive relationships with spouses (21). Regarding the effectiveness of integrated couple therapy, research has shown the effectiveness of this method on marital commitment (12,22), improvement of emotional regulation symptoms (23), marital adjustment (Arian and Etemadi, 1396), psychological well-being of couples (24) and marital boredom and fear of intimacy (3).

Studying the increasing trend of divorce in the last decade and according to official statistics in Iran, it shows that Iran is one of the most prone countries in terms of divorce rates, and recent years has had significant upward growth (25). The dramatic increase in divorce in recent years is a clear indication of marital conflict between couples. By definition, marital conflict is a public dispute between two interdependent people who have disproportionate goals scarce resources and use the other party's intervention to achieve their goals useless (26).

Since Feldman integrated and multilevel couples therapy are among the new treatments in couples and families, they have not been used much in internal research, which leads to a kind of research gap in these therapies. Has been. On the other hand, the researcher seeks to achieve a treatment model consistent with the mentioned treatments by focusing on the variables of marital boredom, marital intimacy, and individual and interpersonal forgiveness. Therefore, according to the above, the question for the researcher is whether the implementation of interventions based on combined couple therapy can significantly improve intimacy and marital commitment and increase the level of individual and interpersonal forgiveness of couples while reducing the level of boredom. Get married to them?

## Method

The present study is quasi-experimental with a pre/test design with a control group. The statistical population included all couples with marital boredom referred to the counseling center of Ibn Sina Hospital in Mashhad in 1399. From this population, 20 teams were selected by available sampling method and randomly divided into integrated couple therapy training and control group. Criteria for inclusion in the study were: in the age range of 25 to 45 years, no mental and sexual disorders, having at least five years of cohabitation, minimum diploma education, no dependence on substance use, no major depressive symptoms or conditions Anxiety, clients should not receive any other psychological treatment when receiving this treatment, and if they have a history of receiving psychological treatment, they should have completed it within one month before entering the medicine. Exclusion criteria were as follows: Diagnosis of mental disorders that affect the treatment process, such as acute personality disorders, simultaneous participation in courses or other psychological interventions, not attending more than three consecutive sessions, unwillingness to Continue treatment. The tools used in this study are:

**Marital Boredom Questionnaire:** A self-assessment tool designed to measure the degree of marital boredom among couples and was developed by Paynes (1996) (27). The questionnaire has 21 items that include three main parts of physical fatigue (feeling tired, lethargic, and having sleep disorders), emotional exhaustion (feeling depressed, hopeless, trapped), and mental exhaustion (feeling worthless, frustrated, and angry). To spouse. Response takes place on a seven-point Likert scale (1 never means and seven means always). The evaluation of the validity coefficient of this scale indicates the similarity between the variables in the range of 0.84 and 0.90. In Iran, Navidi estimated Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire as 0.86 (28).

**Marital Intimacy Questionnaire:** This questionnaire is a 17-item tool translated by Sanaei (29). To determine the content and face validity, first, the questionnaire was reviewed by 15 counseling professors and 15 couples, and its face and content validity was confirmed (30).

Etemadi The total scale reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha method was 0.96 and indicated the acceptable reliability of the questionnaire. Khzaei also achieved complete reliability of 0.85 (30)

**Self-Forgiveness Questionnaire:** This questionnaire is a self-assessment tool designed by Ray et al. (31). This scale consists of 15 items graded on the Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to agree (5) strongly and has two subscales of adverse reaction and positive reaction. The validity of both scales is also reported to be appropriate. Cronbach's alpha for both subscales of no adverse reaction and the positive reaction was 0.86 and 0.85, respectively, and for the whole scale was 0.87. Its retest validity was 0.76 for both subscales and 0.84 for the full scale (31). Asgari et al used this questionnaire in their research and calculated its validity and reliability, which was estimated to be 0.79 for positive reaction and 0.88 for lack of adverse reaction (32).

**Interpersonal Forgiveness Questionnaire:** This questionnaire has 25 questions, and its purpose is to assess the extent of interpersonal forgiveness and its dimensions in different individuals (reconnection and revenge control, resentment control, realistic understanding). The above questionnaire has three reconnection and revenge control, resentment control, and realistic comprehension subscales. Its response range is of the Likert type, with points for each option for Articles 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 vehemently opposed 1, opposed 2, agreed three, and strongly agreed 4. The rest of the items are also scored in reverse. In the study of Ehteshamzadeh et al (33), to assess the validity of the interpersonal forgiveness scale used its simultaneous implementation with the forgiveness subscale in the central FFS family, and the correlation between these two scales was significant. This relationship indicates the excellent validity of this scale. Cronbach's alpha for the interpersonal forgiveness scale questionnaire is presented in the table below.

**Marital Commitment Questionnaire:** This questionnaire was developed by Rost Belt, Martz, and Agnio (34). This questionnaire has seven items with a Likert scale of 9 degrees. I can't entirely agree at all (0) to completely agree (8) to assess the level of commitment of spouses in the marital relationship based on investment model to measure the level of commitment, level

of satisfaction, how alternatives and investment volume marriage Has been. From a total of 7 items, the level of responsibility of the spouses to cohabitation is obtained. The validity of this scale was confirmed in a group of university students, and the reliability of this scale was reported in three studies on university students using the internal consistency method between 0.91 and 0.95. Respondents to the questions of this questionnaire on a scale Likert respond that the minimum score is (0) and the maximum score is (56), which indicates a high level of marital commitment. After obtaining the necessary permits and determining the sample size while observing ethical principles, questionnaires were presented to the selected sample of the present study. Ethical considerations include:

- Coordinating and obtaining permission to enter the research environment.
- Explain the purpose of the research and the method of completing the questionnaires, and participants' right to participate in the study or refuse them.
- Assuring participants about the confidentiality of personal information and obtaining informed consent to participate.

The research was observed. To observe the principles of research ethics, after completing the interventions and performing the post-test, the interventions provided to the control group members were also presented. In this research design, data collected from pre-test and post-test research questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as tables and graphs to show demographic characteristics and deduce data from the ANOVA (ANCOVA) test. It was used to test hypotheses and control the effect of the pre-test. All data analysis steps were performed with SPSS software.

## Results

Examining the education of the sample members, which was done separately by group, the results showed that in the experimental group, five people had a diploma, 11 people had a bachelor's degree, and one person had a master's or doctoral degree. In the control group, one person had an undergraduate degree, six people had a diploma, nine people had a

bachelor's degree, and four had a master's or doctoral degree. The mean and standard deviation of the age of the experimental group members were 36 years and 4.52, respectively, and for the members of the control group were 36 and 4.81, respectively. Also, the mean and standard deviation of the duration of marriage were 12 and 2.59 for the members of the experimental group and 13 and 4.42 for the control group members. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of research variables.

Table 2 shows that the researcher's hypothesis is confirmed, and the adjusted mean scores show the effect of combined couple therapy training on intimacy ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $F = 269.59$  (37 and 1) F), commitment (0.001).  $P$ , 208/448 (F (37 and 1)), individual forgiveness ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $F = 342.984$  (37 and 1)) and interpersonal forgiveness ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $F = 227/861$  (37 and 1) F) Members of experimental groups are approved. In other words, after adjusting the pre-test scores, there is a significant effect of the factor between the subjects in the experimental groups.

## Conclusion

The study's second hypothesis was that combined couple therapy affects intimacy, marital commitment, individual forgiveness, and interpersonal forgiveness with marital boredom. Findings obtained from statistical analysis of research data indicate that the presented interventions have caused the average marital intimacy of the members of the experimental groups compared to the control group in the post-test to be statistically significant. This finding is consistent with the results obtained by Heidari et al. (22), Poursardar et al. (23), Rudi et al. (35), Baraka and Polanski (36), Thompson and Das (37), Gurandona (37) and Karimian et al. (39), Kote et al. (40), Askari et al. (41) and Basaknejad (42).

Findings regarding the effectiveness of the presented interventions on marital intimacy showed that these trainings are based on increasing couples' communication awareness and knowledge and improving people's knowledge about an effective marital relationship by defining an effective relationship based on couples' interests. It has been able to

promote intimacy between couples. These findings indicate the role and importance of interpersonal relationships affecting marital life, and this issue was also reported in many studies (43,44,45) that effective communication enhances the mental health of marital life. And they were followed by satisfaction and satisfaction in living together. On the other hand, the view is that the training and interventions provided, while enhancing the level of learning of couples about their knowledge in the field of marital relationship, can be expected to solve many of their problems and intimacy and satisfaction in their lives.

On the other hand, the findings indicate an improvement in marital commitment due to providing interventions to members of the experimental group compared to members of the control group. Explaining this finding, we can say that in integrated multilevel family therapy, change is a multilevel process in which we see the main processes of change, replication, cognitive reconstruction, exposure, insight, and working at the individual level ourselves. And at the interpersonal level, change is characterized by joining, creating, problem-solving training, re-framing contradictions, making suggestions, and strengthening. On the other hand, it has been found that clear and effective communication between family members leads to the growth of feelings and values. The benefit of family members from effective communication patterns causes the transfer and understanding of the content to be done clearly while satisfying needs. Each other's psychology improves the quality of marital relations. Therefore, it should be said that if a couple can communicate in the right ways, they will have an effective relationship with each other, but the intimacy between them will increase.

On the other hand, the intimacy and emotional companionship of the couple increase their sensitivity to each other, thus increasing their vigorous intercourse. Another finding of this study was the effectiveness of the presented interventions on improving the mean of individual and interpersonal forgiveness in educational group members compared to control group members. In explaining this finding, it can be said that forgiveness in psychology includes models based on purely psychological concepts and principles. Despite the inherent differences, everyone agrees that in psychological models of

forgiveness. Cognitive and emotional processing are most important. The interpersonal aspects of forgiveness, such as trust, benevolence, the absence of anger, and the need for revenge, are all part of these models' emotional and cognitive processes. In this regard, it can be said that people's distorted perceptions and lousy performance are mainly based on unrealistic expectations based on implicit assumptions about themselves and the world. Because of these facts and the results of the present study, it can be said that in addition to creating opportunities to increase the ability of family and couple therapists, it is necessary to apply these theories in the treatment of marital problems such as incompatibility, marital conflict, interpersonal cognitive distortions, and separation. In this way, the necessary measures can be taken to improve and enhance the quality of life of couples in society. Limitations of the research include lack of control over the time of answering the questionnaires, lack of control over the factor of economic and social classes, and a large number of questionnaire items that caused fatigue in the sample members.

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