



# Efficiency of the Existential Time Training on the Marital Satisfaction among the Iranian Women

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of time as an essential part of every individual's life cannot be ignored. Additionally, while experts in various areas of science and technology have their own perspective of time, the existential philosophers interpret time in their own particular way. Existential concern regarding the notion of time is not considered in existential counselling as much as several other existential elements. Although the possibilities and abilities of existential time are of great importance on the matrimony, there is a notable gap in experimental research regarding the application of this concept in matrimony. Furthermore, the concern among the counsellors in employing the new models and ideas during marital counselling sessions is not deniable. Consequently, the present study was aimed at estimating the effects of Existential Time Training on the marital satisfaction. For such a purpose, 50 women were randomly selected. The results revealed that the training sessions have had a significant impact on the women's marital satisfaction.

**Keywords** Existential Time Training; Marital Satisfaction; Iranian Women.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As human organizations, families are in charge of a vital task in the society. It can be rationally realized that the society's prosperity or depression, and evolution or destruction depend deeply on the overall state of the families, especially the couples. That is because a society is formed by the collection of families, and compassion, ambition and vitality among the couples eventually lead to the progression of the society. However, many couples have currently realized that the trivial problems of everyday life are increasingly imposing a negative impact on their marital quality. High quality levels of marital life are recognized as an essential factor among the counsellors and psychologists in decreasing the chances of divorce. In this regard, marital satisfaction is regarded as a token of a qualified matrimony. Although there are so many contributing factors inducing the divorce, lack of marital satisfaction is considered as one of the main factors in this regard (Sprajcar, 2004). Therefore, as long as the marital satisfaction survives, it is regarded as an indicator of the marital quality. Undoubtedly, dissatisfactory marriage is realized as the defining down player of the matrimonial persistency. It is worth mentioning that the couples typically refer to their satisfaction upon their partners' contributions to a marriage tie, while they are at the same time capable of fulfilling their needs and the

marital expectations together (Rozumah & Rumaya, 2002).

Throughout decades, family counsellors and psychologists have found out that there are diversities of factors associating with the marital satisfaction. Some studies have indicated that personal characteristics such as self-esteem and optimism are the main function influencing the overall state of the marital satisfaction (Dethier, Couterotte, & Blairy, 2011; Johnson, et al., 2005; Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008). Other studies have identified that people with high self-esteem namely those enjoying self-respect have more chances of being benefitted from the marital satisfaction in their life (Dethier, et al., 2011; Kang, Shaver, Sue, Min, & Jing, 2003). In addition, low self-esteem is mostly characterized with those who may not forget past bad experiences (Beaudry, 2002). Yet, another factor acting upon the quality of the matrimony is the negative events in the connubial life. There are evidences showing that higher reported events with negative nature affects the matrimonial state of living harmfully (Cohan & Cole, 2002; Tesser & Beach, 1998). Some researches have also stated that couples reporting more negative events are less profited from their partners support (Cohan & Cole, 2002). In fact, marriage dissatisfaction normally occurs as the result of such issues as stress, anxiety, fear, dissimilarities, and boredom. Many researches have confirmed that lower marital satisfaction is mostly seen among the couples suffering from higher levels of anxiety (Arrindell & Emmelkamp, 1986; Kulik, 2006; Whisman, Uebelacker, & Weinstock, 2004). It should be noted that the anxiety

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of one party always distresses the other one, accordingly (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009) which eventually leads to the marital dissatisfaction (Gubbins, Perosa, & Bartle-Haring, 2010). Kouros, Mark and Cummings (2011) found that the couples anxiety is frequently concerned with the negative expressions and emotions such as anger and sadness. In another research, depression is stated to be coupled with deficient marital quality (McLeod, 1994; Biglan *et al.*, 1985; Davila, Bradbury, Cohan, & Tochluk, 1997; Cohan & Cole, 2002). Depressed spouses suffers from downbeat communication status such as greater harmful verbal and behavioral manners towards each other (Kouros & Mark Cummings, 2011; Papp, Kouros, & Cummings, 2009). Stress is another element negatively impacts the quality of connubial life (Kouros & Mark Cummings, 2011; Ledermann, Bodenmann, Rudaz, & Bradbury, 2010; Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). Furthermore, pessimistic thinking is another component negatively torments the matrimonial satisfaction (Honarian, Younesi, Shafiabadi, & Nafissi, 2010). Couples engagement in destructive thinking curbs the marital benefits which are followed by the negative feelings and behaviors such as nagging and criticizing. Gottman (1999) has outlined such leading issues contributing to divorce including higher ratio of negative to positive behaviors, attribution of the negative feelings to the other party, extensive criticism, defensiveness, contempt, resistance against the logical influencing from the spouse, and dialogue avoidance. Additionally, different approaches employed by the couples to bring a meaning back to life has long been a common issue for the existential counselling (Frankl, 1988), and researchers

have revealed that searching for such a concept in life is among the major goals of everyone's existence (Frankl, 1984). In many studies, the significance of establishing a meaning to improve the quality of the matrimony is emphasized (Kantor & Lehr, 1975; Tompson, 1991). Statistics also have confirmed the constructive power of the existence of a meaning in the matrimony on the marital satisfaction ( Frankl, 1984; Kalantar & Hassan, 2010). From existential point of view, couple therapists affirm that the majority of the marital problems take place when the couples have not realized, experienced, and made use of the potential meanings of the matrimony (Lantz, 1974, 1991; Lantz, 1994b).

It seems that the aforementioned factors can be affected by the possibilities observed in the existential time. Existential counsellors mention that time is an important and a central aspect of the existential couple counselling ( Frankl, 1988; Lantz, 2004b; Spinelli, 2002; Straus, 1967). They believe that the individuals have got different responsibilities during different time periods (Table 1). It is also known that some marital problems turn up by ignoring the observed relationship between the responsibilities and the regarding time period. Thus, it is the role of the existential counsellors to help the couples to become aware of such relationships.

Regarding the past undesirable incidents as a factor negatively associated with the marital satisfaction, from the existential time, it is not an appropriate practice to forget the past but rather accepting and honoring it.

**Table 1. Existential Time and Responsibility Relationship (Lantz, 1995)**

Existential Time	Responsibility
Future	Noticing
Present	Actualizing
Past	Honoring

Additionally, Miller (2010) added that this strategy helps a person begins to look into the future with optimism and hope. Thus, growth and improvements are enhanced through this attitude towards the time (Beaudry, 2002; Miller, 2010; Satir, Banmen, Gerber, & Gomori, 1991). Indeed, when someone is succeeded to joyfully interpret the unpleasant experiences, other choices of freedom and responsibility can ultimately be recognized which are crucial steps in granting a qualified matrimony (See: Bowen, 1974; Satir, 1983; Yalom, 1980). Moreover, as it was mentioned earlier, depression and anxiety impose negative effects on the marital life (Adams, Harper, Emberly, & Cobia, 2006). In this regard, more attention should be paid to the consequences of accepting and honoring the past. Miller (2010) put forward that adjusting and accepting the transition and the development of an optimistic view in favor of the future are significant ingredients in resolv-

ing the depression which comes from the past, stress which is resulted from the present, and anxiety which belongs to the future. They all affect the marital satisfaction (Arrindell & Emmelkamp, 1986; Cohan & Cole, 2002; Kouros & Mark Cummings, 2011; Kulik, 2006; Whisman, *et al.*, 2004). When the couples honor the past events, their self-esteem is increased, undoubtedly. For this, self blaming which is rooted in the past events and happens in the present is altered to work out the current conditions. Therefore, being attended, a future responsibility which has been taking place since the past is regarded as a brilliant point and presents a way towards future rather than past. As earlier stated, negative thinking is another reason of low marital satisfaction. It seems that negative thinking is rooted in the hurtful events experienced in the past. Therefore, it requires to be decreased, if not totally illuminated, by helping the participants during the training

sessions to change their attitude towards the past. Another major element in the marital satisfaction is to make the life meaningful. Finding and making such a notion depend on the future portion of the existential time. It is required to let the spouses realize that in the future they still have got chances to actualize their marital life with potential meanings (Lantz, 1995). Such an actualization happens as soon as they can admire the past and actualize the potentials of the present time. In short, realization of the mutual relationship between the marital satisfaction and the existential time factors illuminates how the couples can achieve their marital goals by making use of the existential time.

Some concepts of the existential time have been used in some researches and trainings for different purposes (See: Creamer, Burgess, & Pattison, 1992; Lantz, 1995, 2001; Lantz & Ahern, 1998; Lantz & Gyamerah, 2002; LeMay & Wilson, 2008). Findings have affirmed that the treatment is useful with some client groups such as women facing breast cancer (Lantz & Gregoire, 2000b), post-parental (Lantz, 1999), chronically ill and migrating (Lantz, 1996), fast-track suburban (Lantz & Witter, 1994), hyper somatic (Lantz, 1993), traumatized (Lantz, 1993), and urban-Appalachian couples (Lantz, 1993), as well as distressful women with metastatic breast cancer (LeMay & Wilson, 2008). However, as far as the current findings are concern, there has not been any research carried out to estimate the effect of existential time on the marital satisfaction as a measure of the matrimonial quality. Indeed, sufficient training based on existential time which mainly points out some of the key concepts from a new point of view is ignored by a variety of theories regarding the marital satisfaction improvement. The current research's objective was to evaluate the effect of the existential time training on the marital satisfaction by utilizing an experimental research approach. It was intended to have its own population, namely the spouses, confidently increase their marital satisfaction. By employing various practices, the participants recalled their past, actualized the present, and marked the future.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

The aim of the current experimental research was to illuminate the effects of the existential time training on the marital satisfaction among the Iranian women. The research is classified as an experimental one where a randomized control group of a pretest-posttest design was established by employing the same pre-test and post-tests for both the experimental and the control groups.

### 2.2. Participants

The population considered for the research was selected from the Iranian women assembled by the Ivanac Health House Center's running advertisement. The

center is located in the second municipality area of Tehran. The samples used in this research were randomly selected from those who has earned below 4 out of 5 on the pretest of marital satisfaction questionnaire. The sample was comprised of 50 women categorized into the experimental and control groups of 25 participants each which were assigned randomly.

### 2.3. Materials

Two types of questionnaires were included as the materials used in the study were. The first one was the demographics questionnaire including age, duration of the marital life, and the number of children. The second one was the marital satisfaction subscale of ENRICH. The scale was first developed by Olson, Fournier and Druckman in 1985. The ENRICH scales have high levels of reliability and validity (Larsen & Olson, 1989; Olson & Olson, 1999). It has been validated in various researches and its solid reliability has been confirmed. The alpha coefficient of reliability of the scales is 0.81 for the Marital Satisfaction (Olson & Fowers, 1993), while in the current research, it is 0.79.

### 2.4. Procedure

The study was conducted among the Iranian women assembled by the Ivanac Health House Center which is located in the second municipality area of Tehran, Iran. The samples used in this research were randomly selected from those who has earned below 4 out of 5 on the pretest. The experimental and control groups encompassed 25 participants each. The training was held during the course of 3 sessions (70 minutes per session). Throughout the sessions, the experimental group was trained based on existential time, whereas those at the control group were intentionally left unattended. Following the training, a posttest was given to the control group as well as the experimental one, and the results achieved were analyzed to assess the effects of the training course.

### 2.5. Null hypotheses

H01) There is no significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test mean scores of the marital satisfaction of the experimental group.

H02) There is no significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test mean scores of the marital satisfaction of the control group.

H03) There is no significant difference between the experimental and the control groups as to the post-test mean scores of the marital satisfaction.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Descriptive Findings of Demographics Questionnaire from both Groups before The Training

The participants average age in the experimental group was 34.92 years (SD = 6.35), ranged from 25 to 45 years old where it was 34.68 (SD = 6) in the control group, ranged from 25 to 44 years old. Furthermore,

the number of children in the experimental and the control groups was from 0 to 4, similarly. Moreover, the samples in the experimental and the control groups had been married for 3-20 years ( $M = 9.60$ ), and 4-19 years ( $M = 9.92$ ), respectively.

### 3.2. Homogeneity Test of Marital Satisfaction in the Experimental and the Control Groups

Levene's Test was performed over the achieved pre-test scores of the groups to identify the homogeneity

of the variables including the marital satisfaction, age, elapsed time from the marriage, and the number of children. The results derived by running the Levene's Test of Variances Equality in SPSS, were presented in Table 2. Since the significance level in the marital satisfaction pre-test is greater than 0.05, then the group variances were treated equally in order not to violate the assumption of the homogeneity of the variances.

**Table 2. Homogeneity Tests of Marital Satisfaction, Age, Time Elapsed form the Marriage and number of children between the Experimental and the Control Groups**

Variables	Experimental Group (n = 25) M±SD	Control Group (n = 25) M±SD	sig
Marital Satisfaction	2.89 ±0.398	2.90 ±0.364	0.466
Age	34.92 ±6.35	34.68 ±6	0.465
Time Elapsed from the Marriage	9.60 ±4.60	9.92 ±3.36	0.147
Number of children	2.04±1.13	2±1.04	0.531

### 3.3. Null hypotheses Tests

The results of the null-hypothesis testing are presented in Tables 3. The results of the t-test over paired-samples indicated that the experimental group's post-tests scores were significantly higher ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = \pm 0.375$ ) than the group's pre-test ones ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 0.390$ ),  $t(49) = 4.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.65$ . Therefore the H01 hypothesis was rejected. Furthermore, a paired-samples t-test results showed that the control group's post-tests as well as the pre-test scores were almost

the same ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 0.364$ ; and  $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.390$ , respectively),  $t(49) = 0.670$ ,  $p = 0.509$ . As a result, the H02 hypothesis was discarded, consequently. Additionally, an independent-samples t-test was resulted in the scores significantly higher for the post-tests of the experimental group ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 0.375$ ) than that of the control one ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.390$ ),  $t(48) = 2.254$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.70$ , and thus, it was concluded that the third null-hypothesis was turned down, as well.

**Table3: Mean Comparisons on Outcome the Variable between the Experimental and Control groups**

Variable	Group	Pre test M±SD	Post test M±SD	t	p	Effect Size
Marital Satisfaction	Experimental group (n=25)	2.89±.390	3.14±.375	4.49	.000	.65
	Control group (n=25)	2.90 ±.364	2.87±.390	.670	.509	
	Experimental group (n=25)		3.14±.375			
	Control group (n=25)		2.87±.390	2.254	.016	.70

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current research was to examine the effects of the existential time training on the marital satisfaction among the Iranian women. The results in conformity to the hypotheses confirmed that the training which was based on the existential time posi-

tively influenced the marital satisfaction. A significant relationship was also determined between the existential time and high self-esteem since the later is regarded as a predictor of the marital satisfaction which can be appropriately influenced by the existential time training. The training was aimed to decrease some

problematic symptoms such as depression, anxiety and stress. Therefore, the current study underscored such studies stating a relationship between the marital satisfaction and the concerning problems (Arrindell & Emmelkamp, 1986; Cohan & Cole, 2002; Kouros & Mark Cummings, 2011; Kulik, 2006; Whisman, et al., 2004). Besides, the results demonstrated that the existential time training have had well positive decreasing effect on the pessimistic judgment of the couples since throughout the training sessions, they were assisted to honor their past experiences. In fact, the existential time training, through creating a new perception for the participants, has tried to modify such unhelpful thinking towards elements including past bad experiences, anxiety about the future, and present nervousness. Therefore, by helping them change their perception, an increasing trend was observed in the marital satisfaction of the participants. In other words, such an approach facilitated the conditions to instrumentally employ the past to improve the future attitudes by helping the spouses change their perspective towards their old traumatic experiences and then honor the past. Last but not least, there are some similarities between the existential time and the Iranian culture which has been merged with the Islamic approaches. Indeed, such concepts as forgiveness, maintaining the past as it was, realizing each day to have its own grade, and looking at the past as an experience for the future, have all been highlighted and discussed in detail in the Islamic approach, as well. Therefore, the current study suggests an approach based on the combined effects of both of the concepts of the existential time and the Islamic approaches. Also, since the training course was conducted only for 3 sessions, and the sample population was 50, further research considering more populated samples over numerous training sessions is recommended by the current research.

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