

## Research Article

### The Effect of Transactional Analysis Group Training on Marital Satisfaction of Men and Women referring to the Counseling Centers and Cultural Centers in Isfahan

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**Abstract:** Objective: The present paper is aimed at studying the effect of transactional analysis group training on marital satisfaction of men and women referring to the counseling centers and cultural centers in Isfahan. Method: the present paper is a semi-empirical research in the form of pre-test and post-test with the control group. The research sample was selected randomly from among 114 applicants for participating in the group training and was categorized into two groups. The first group included 30 married men and 30 women (60 persons) as the test group and the second group included 30 married men and women (30 persons) as the control group. Both groups were pre-tested by ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Inventory (short form) (Elson *et al.*, 1989). The test group underwent 10 sessions of transactional analysis group training. To examine raw data, SPSS-15 was used and the results were analyzed by using multi variable analysis of co-variance. Findings: the results revealed that after transactional analysis group training, there was a significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) between marital satisfaction of the married men and women in the test group and of those in the control group. Conclusions: many obstacles of a proper relation may be removed by training married men and women in analyzing verbal and non-verbal effective communication.

**Keywords:** Marital satisfaction, married men and women, transactional analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction that spouses experience in a marriage is among very important aspects of a marital system (Taniguchi *et al.*, 2006). However marital satisfaction is not achieved easily (Rosen-Grandon *et al.*, 2005). Marital relations may be the origin of happiness or the great resource of pain and grief. Love starts from hope; hope to a day when the person feelings are appreciated or accepted and a pleasant relation is created. Communication allows the husband and wife to discuss with each other, resolve their problems and get informed about needs of each other. The couples who cannot establish relation with each other are placed in an uncertain situation (Young and Long, 2007).

Hence, marital satisfaction represents the person overall evaluation in which positive features are salient and there is nearly no negative feature; and lack of marital satisfaction reflects the evaluation in which negative features are very salient and there is relatively no positive feature (Bradbury *et al.*, 2006).

Communication plays a central role in the marriage (Burlson and Denton, 2005). In terms of marital features, it has been revealed that an effective and efficient relation between husband and wife is among the most important aspects of families with favorable function (Greeff and Malherbe, 2005). In general, there is a general assumption indicating that many marital problems are due to inefficient communicative skills of

the spouses. According to this viewpoint, O'Donohue and Crouch stated in 1996 that training communication as an effort in repairing the relation has become an important component in many therapeutic marital approaches (Burlson and Denton, 2005). Studies reveal that family conflicts (Gary, 2009; Flicker, 2008) and difficulty in establishing a constructive interaction (Christensen and Sheng, 2007) are among the major reasons of spouses' disputes; while increase in the relation quality and training communicative skills (Markman, 2011) cause marital satisfaction.

Transactional analysis is a theory about personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal changes and growth. This definition has been presented by the International Association of Transactional Analysis (Stewart and Jones, 2009). Transactional analysis means that which ego state is powerful and may understand better its own and others behavior in the social context (George and Christiani, 2009).

In this method, interaction of different ego-states (including child, adult, parent) is considered (Kursini, 1970, quoted by ShafiAbadi, 2010).

"Child" ego state is a set of feelings, attitudes and behaviors survived from the person childhood. "Parent" ego state is a set of feelings, attitudes and behaviors similar to those existing in the parents. "Adult" ego state is characterized by a set of independent feelings, attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with the existing reality (ShafiAbadi, 2010).

According to Bern, impurity is a boundary problem between two ego states and happens when biased or irrational beliefs and attitudes of parent and/or old and obsolete feelings of child have intervened in the rational thought of the adult (Shilling, 2007).

Boholst (2007) has studied the ego state responses of the participants and their perception of other ego states during 5 days of transactional analysis group therapy. This study has been aimed at increasing "security-giving parent", "adult" and "free child" states of the participants and decreasing their "criticizing parent" and "adapted child". The results revealed that after therapy, they reached changes considered for ego states.

Deal (2010) has underscored the importance of mutual understanding in the marital relation and its role in the marital satisfaction and happiness and also treatment of children behavioral disorders and states that couples who enjoy good quality of communication or mutual understanding have better health conditions and a mutual empathy is created between them which increases marital satisfaction and happiness.

Andromico (2009) studies the effect of transactional analysis therapy in family therapy and group therapy and concluded that increase in the marital satisfaction relative to the control group is significant.

ShafiAbadi *et al.* (2010) in a research aimed at determining the effect of two solution-oriented and transactional analysis approaches on changing the marital satisfaction level in the married men and women in Tehran showed that transactional analysis was a very good method for increasing marital satisfaction level and was superior to the solution-oriented approach.

Salamat *et al.* (2007) studied the effect of training transactional analysis skills on the reduction of marital conflicts. In this research, 12 couples in the test group and 12 couples in the control group were studied. The analysis results revealed that this training increases agreement on leisure time, satisfaction, intimacy, improves conversation method, criticism method, conclusion from discussion and reduces marital conflicts.

The research conducted by Torkan *et al.* (2006) aimed at studying the effect of group therapy by transactional analysis on the couples marital satisfaction showed the effect of this therapy on increasing marital satisfaction of men, women and in general, couples of the test group compared to those in the control group and continuity of this effect.

Danesh (2006) studied the effect of verbal transactional analysis method on marital compatibility of discordant couples and selected 14 discordant couples randomly for two test and control groups. Analysis of data obtained from "compatibility scale" of both groups in the post-test stage reflected that this method has increased marital compatibility of the test group compared to the time before therapy and compared to the control group.

In another research titled as the effect of training behavioral-cognitive, Islamic and transactional analysis couple-therapy approaches on the marital compatibility of discordant couples, the test groups underwent 10-12 sessions of trainings and the control group received no training. The results showed that training of behavioral-cognitive, Islamic and transactional analysis couple-therapy approaches increase marital compatibility of discordant couples and behavioral-cognitive couple-therapy is more effective than Islamic and transactional analysis approaches (Fotuhi Bonab *et al.*, 2009).

In a research carried out by Salari aimed at studying the effect of transactional analysis group therapy on increasing emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of couples in Mashhad, after dividing the participants into control and test groups and providing the test group with 12 training sessions, the results suggested that in the post-test stage, emotional intelligence of the test group couples was significantly more than the control group, but changes in their marital satisfaction was not significant and also there was a direct and significant correlation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction (2007).

Maverdi Jaqarq (2009) showed that training communicative skills increased marital satisfaction and improved communicative beliefs of the couples.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research method:** The present paper is a semi-empirical research in the form of pre-test and post-test with the control group. Independent variable in this study includes transactional analysis group training and dependent variable is marital satisfaction and its components. To analyze data, descriptive statistics and deductive statistics such as multi variable analysis of variance were used.

**Statistical universe:** It comprises all married men and women referring to the counseling centers in Isfahan. The sample includes 90 married men and women selected by using random sampling method and divided into two test group (60 persons) and control group (30 persons) and a 10 sessions educational program of transactional analysis was implemented on the test group.

**Data collection tool:**

**ENRICH (Evaluating and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness) marital satisfaction test:** Elson and colleagues used this questionnaire in 1989 for studying marital satisfaction and believe that it pertains to the changes occurred during human life. The questionnaire uses a 5-point scale (with Likert vision); each option is scored from one to five. In Mahdian research, Pearson correlation coefficient in the re-test method (after one week) was obtained 0.937 for men group, 0.944 for women group and 0.94 for men and women group. Correlation coefficients of ENRICH questionnaire were from

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of marital satisfaction and its dimensions in the married men and women

Sentence	Completely agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Completely disagree
1					
2					
3					
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0.41 to 0.60 with family satisfaction scales and from 0.32 to 0.41 with life satisfaction scales which indicate its validity. Alpha coefficient was estimated 0.92 in the 48-question questionnaire form in MirKheshti research (1996) and 0.95 in the 47-question questionnaire form in Soleimanian research (1994). The original form has had 115 questions and has been reported valid with Cronbach alpha 0.92. In the present paper, the alpha coefficient of the shortened form was calculated 0.95.

**Questionnaire of marital satisfaction:** This questionnaire includes some sentences about different aspects of your life that you may agree or disagree with it. Please read each sentence carefully and specify the level of your agreement or disagreement by (x). Please note that there is no correct or false answer. Please try to avoid selecting "neither agree nor disagree" as far as possible; select this item only when you have doubt about your agreement or disagreement with a sentence (Table 1).

## RESULTS

As seen in Table 2, among married men and women, mean of marital satisfaction post-test equals 3.4 in the test group and 2.5 in the control group. Mean of personal matters post-test equals 4.4 in the test group and 1.5 in the control group. Mean of marital relationship post-test equals 4.5 in the test group and 1.5 in the control group. Mean of financial management post-test equals 2.9 in the test group and 2.67 in the control group. Mean of leisure time activities post-test equals 1.4 in the test group and 4.07 in the control

group. Mean of sexual relationship post-test equals 4.3 in the test group and 1.37 in the control group. Mean of children post-test equals 3.25 in the test group and 2.63 in the control group. Mean of family and friends post-test equals 4.43 in the test group and 1.5 in the control group. Means of egalitarian roles post-test equals 3.73 in the test group and 2.08 in the control group. Mean of religious orientation post-test equals 4.27 in the test group and 1.83 in the control group.

Mean of marital satisfaction post-test equals 3.74 in the test group and 2.11 in the control group.

The results of multi variable covariance analysis of post-testing of marital satisfaction and its dimensions after controlling pre-test have been presented in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, there is a significant difference ( $F = 84.43$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) in the marital satisfaction between married men and women of two groups. Eta square equals 0.84 which means 84 percent of differences of groups in the marital satisfaction have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for marital satisfaction equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance has approved by 100% power the difference between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference between married men and women of two groups in terms of personal matters ( $F = 137.87$  and  $P < 0.01$ ). Eta square equals 0.9 and means that 90% of differences between groups in the personal matters have pertained to transactional analysis training.

Test power for personal matters equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of marital satisfaction and its dimensions in the married men and women

Row No.	Marital satisfaction and its dimensions	Test	Test group		Control group	
			M	S.D.	M	S.D.
1	Marital satisfaction	Pre-test	2.45	0.15	2.6	0.18
		Post-test	3.4	0.16	2.5	0.14
2	Personal matters	Pre-test	1.44	0.2	1.42	0.32
		Post-test	4.4	0.38	1.5	0.37
3	Marital relationship	Pre-test	1.45	0.17	1.45	0.21
		Post-test	4.5	0.19	1.5	0.25
4	Conflict settlement	Pre-test	1.58	0.2	1.6	0.37
		Post-test	4.5	0.16	1.5	0.32
5	Financial management	Pre-test	2.77	0.3	2.78	0.26
		Post-test	2.9	0.28	2.67	0.28
6	Activities of leisure time	Pre-test	4.33	0.33	4.42	0.32
		Post-test	1.4	0.42	4.07	0.44
7	Sexual relationship	Pre-test	1.52	0.3	1.38	0.18
		Post-test	4.3	0.37	1.37	0.21
8	Children	Pre-test	2.58	0.24	2.63	0.25
		Post-test	3.25	0.3	2.63	0.28
9	Family and friends	Pre-test	1.62	0.32	1.3	0.21
		Post-test	4.43	0.22	1.5	0.21
10	Egalitarian roles	Pre-test	2.13	0.18	2.12	0.16
		Post-test	3.73	0.29	2.08	0.18
11	Religious orientation	Pre-test	1.5	0.32	1.53	0.4
		Post-test	4.27	0.32	1.83	0.41
12	Total marital satisfaction	Pre-test	2.12	0.07	2.11	0.1
		Post-test	3.74	0.09	2.11	0.07

Table 3: The results of multi variable covariance analysis of post-test of marital satisfaction and its dimensions after controlling pre-test in the married men and women

Row No.	Marital satisfaction and its dimensions	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	F	Sig.	Eta square	Test power
1	Marital satisfaction	33.40	2	2.16	84.43	0.000	0.84	1
2	Personal matters	64.38	2	19.32	137.87	0.000	0.90	1
3	Marital relationship	61.37	2	18.81	285.1	0.000	0.95	1
4	Conflict settlement	43.07	2	21.53	282.43	0.000	0.95	1
5	Financial management	0.44	2	0.22	2.53	0.100	0.14	0.47
6	Activities of leisure time	29.75	2	14.87	129.82	0.000	0.89	1
7	Sexual relation	40.38	2	20.19	211.22	0.000	0.93	1
8	Children	2.39	2	1.20	12.98	0.000	0.46	0.99
9	Family and friends	40.73	2	20.36	461.84	0.000	0.97	1
10	Egalitarian roles	12.11	2	6.05	95.78	0.000	0.84	1
11	Religious orientation	26.94	2	13.47	77.88	0.000	0.83	1
12	Total marital satisfaction	12.45	2	6.23	1084.87	0.000	0.99	1

100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 285.1$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of marital relationship. Eta square equals 0.95 and means that 95% of differences between groups in the marital relationship have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for marital relationship equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 282.43$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of conflict settlement. Eta square equals 0.95 and means that 95% of differences between groups in terms of conflict settlement have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for conflict settlement equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is no significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of financial management. There is a significant difference ( $F = 129.82$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of leisure time activities. Eta square equals 0.89 and means that 89% of differences between groups in leisure time activities have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for leisure time activities equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 211.22$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of sexual relationship. Eta square equals 0.93 and means that 93% of differences between groups in sexual relationship have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for sexual relationship equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant

difference ( $F = 12.98$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of children. Eta square equals 0.46 and means that 46% of differences between groups in terms of children have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for children equals 0.99 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 99% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 461.84$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of family and friends. Eta square equals 0.97 and means that 97% of differences between groups in terms of family and friends have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for family and friends equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 95.78$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of egalitarian roles. Eta square equals 0.84 and means that 84% of differences between groups in terms of egalitarian roles have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for egalitarian roles equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 77.88$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of religious orientation. Eta square equals 0.83 and means that 83% of differences between groups in terms of religious orientation have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for religious orientation equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons). There is a significant difference ( $F = 1084.87$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) between married men and women of two groups in terms of marital satisfaction. Eta square equals 0.99 and means that 99% of differences between groups in terms of marital satisfaction have pertained to transactional analysis training. Test power for marital satisfaction

equals 1 and means that multi variable analysis of covariance with 100% power has approved differences between groups based on the studied sample number (each group 15 persons).

### CONCLUSION

Findings of this study are consistent with Gary (2009), Flicker (2008), Markman (2011), Boholst (2007), Deal (2010) andromico (2009), Salamat (2005), Torkan *et al.* (2006), Danesh (2006), Fotuhi Bonab *et al.* (2009), Salari (2007), Maverdi Jaqarq (2009), Shafiei *et al.* (2010) findings.

Torkan research showed that transactional analysis group therapy was effective on increasing marital satisfaction of men, women and in general couples of test group compared to those in the control group. Also training Transactional Analysis (TA) skills has been effective on increase in couples agreement on leisure time spending ( $p = 0.004$ ) (Salamat *et al.*, 2007). Probably, such training makes the test group aware of their own and their spouses characteristics and found out that the occurred dispute regarding leisure time pertains to the conflict of which "egos" of the parties and so apply the presented solutions.

Research has shown that training transactional analysis skills has had no effect on increase in the married men and women agreement on the religious affairs. In elaborating the research findings, one can state that in the religious aspect, values of the couples collide with each other ("parent egos" of the parties collide with each other) and as we know values are a set of beliefs, customs and biases that each person gains with regard to the education from childhood to adolescence and his family and environmental culture. Usually people think that what they have gained as value corresponds with reality (absolute truth); while it may not be so. Therefore, two parties usually show resistance. Another research depicted that the test and control groups did not show a significant difference in terms of financial affairs (Salamat *et al.*, 2007).

Salamat *et al.* (2007) found out in a research that training transactional analysis skills has not been effective on reducing verbal and non-verbal violence of women. It seems that training transactional analysis skills to the test group reduces men and women conflicts with their spouses (Shafiei *et al.*, 2010). It is justified that individuals learn in these classes that when "parent" of two parties collide with each other or "parent" of a party collide with "adult" of another, a dispute is created; so they try to not enter these parts of their own and spouses characters when a problem emerges. Consequently the number of conflicts is reduced and they have tried to lose less their self-control.

Findings of Salamat *et al.* (2007) research showed that training transactional analysis skills has not been effective on increasing couples' agreement on

socializing with friends and relatives. Salamat *et al.* (2007) revealed that training transactional analysis skills has been effective on increasing intimacy of spouses. Probably training transactional analysis skills has helped spouses to find and fondle "child" egos of each other (under supervision of adult) and so become more intimate with each other.

The role of training transactional analysis in reducing marital conflicts and increasing marital satisfaction in the married men and women approves the above mentioned researches.

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