



Investigating the effect of premarital education based on the SYMBIS model on communication skills and conflict resolution skills of fiancés

Elham. Majidi¹

Hengameh. Asgari Dehaghani^{2*}

Marziyeh. Dehghani³

Mohammad. Samadi⁴

1. Master of Science, General Psychology, Khorasgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan, Iran

2. *Corresponding author: Master of Science, General Psychology, Zarrin Shahr Branch, Payame Noor University, Zarrin Shahr, Iran

3. Master of Science, Clinical Psychology, Tehran West Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

4. Master of Science, Clinical Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Email: mohsenfazel1121@yahoo.com

Received: 10.05.2023

Acceptance: 29.12.2023

Journal of
Applied Family Therapy

eISSN: 2717-2430
http://Aftj.ir

Vol. 4, No. 5, Pp: 492-505
Winter 2023

Original research article

How to Cite This Article:

Majidi, E., Asgari Dehaghani, H., Dehghani, M., & Samadi, M. (2023). Investigating the effect of premarital education based on the SYMBIS model on communication skills and conflict resolution skills of fiancés. *Aftj*. 4(5), 492-505.



© 2023 by the authors. Licensee Iranian Association of Women's Studies, Tehran, Iran. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0 license) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of premarital education based on the SYMBIS model on communication skills and conflict resolution skills of fiancés. **Method:** In terms of the purpose, the current research was of an applied type, and in terms of the research design and method, it was a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test design with an experimental group and a control group and a three-month follow-up period. Based on this, the statistical population of the research included all the fiancés who referred to the counseling centers of the 7th district of Tehran to receive pre-marital counseling in the first half of 2011. Therefore, 40 people (20 couples) were selected from among these people and were randomly assigned to an experimental group (20 people) and a control group (20 people). Then, premarital education based on the SYMBIS model prepared by Les and Leslie Perot (2006) was implemented on the experimental group. Also, in order to collect data, the research tools included the conflict resolution questionnaire (CRQ) and the communication skills questionnaire of Christensen and Salluvay (1984). In the descriptive part, frequency distribution tables were used, and in the inferential part of data analysis, mixed variance analysis with repeated measurements and Bonferroni's post hoc test and SPSS software version 26 were used. **Results:** The F value and the significance level of the obtained value were calculated in the variable of communication skills ($F = 7.83$ and $P = 0.004$) and conflict resolution skills ($F = 6.91$ and $P = 0.006$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the independent variable i.e. premarital education based on the SYMBIS model has significantly changed the dependent variables i.e. communication skills and conflict resolution skills. This means that the changes made in the dependent variables were caused by the membership in the experimental group or the independent variable (premarital education based on the SYMBIS model). **Conclusion:** Based on the findings, it can be concluded that premarital education based on the SYMBIS model is effective on the communication skills and conflict resolution skills of the fiancés. Therefore, this model can be used in premarital counseling. **Keywords:** premarital education, SYMBIS model, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, fiancés.

Introduction

Conflict is defined as the absence of agreement and opposition between two individuals, characterized by the incompatibility of opinions and behavioral objectives that are directed against each other. Conflict is not always negative; it is a method used by couples to manage their flawed relationships, but it can negatively impact the relationship (Darbani & Parsakia, 2022). Although all spouses experience conflict in their marital lives, they do not all respond in the same way and adopt different conflict resolution strategies. Conflict resolution strategies are a key indicator of successful romantic relationships, and individuals with strong conflict resolution strategies can extend the duration of their relationship (Viskerich & Deloie, 2013). If couples have poor conflict resolution skills and if conflicts are managed ineffectively, it can lead to the destruction of marital life and have detrimental effects on the physical and emotional health of the couple (Karimi, Karami, & Dehghan, 2014).

The SYMBIS model focuses on enriching marriage among engaged couples, those about to be engaged, and newly married couples (Wylie, 2012). The SYMBIS model is flexible and has been applied in various therapeutic, educational, and group settings. In its most comprehensive and strongest form, it requires a therapist with at least a master's degree or a spiritual counselor with a basic understanding of family system dynamics (Marks, 2007). The SYMBIS model can be conducted by a facilitator using an 8-session program for couples, which includes guidance for supervisors and a follow-up design for the marriage counseling program. This complete marriage preparation program has been successfully implemented in university campuses and in Protestant and Catholic churches (Parrott & Parrott, 2006); even couples may use the program independently, as they wish, by reading the book, watching video sessions, and performing exercises to benefit from it (Ghazalsafloo & Rostami, 2018). Therefore, given the importance of the engagement period and the two variables in question, namely communication skills and conflict resolution skills, and the necessity of pre-marriage training for the sustainability of marriage, the present study aims to answer the following question: Is pre-marital training based on the SYMBIS model effective in enhancing the communication and conflict resolution skills of engaged couples?

Method

In terms of the purpose, the current research was of an applied type, and in terms of the research design and method, it was a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test design with an experimental group and a control group and a three-month follow-up period. Based on this, the statistical population of the research included all the fiancés who referred to the counseling centers of the 7th district of Tehran to receive pre-marital counseling in the first half of 2011. Therefore, 40 people (20 couples) were selected from among these people and were randomly assigned to an experimental group (20 people) and a control group (20 people). Then, premarital education based on the SYMBIS model prepared by Les and Leslie Perot (2006) was implemented on the experimental group. Also, in order to collect data, the research tools included the conflict resolution questionnaire (CRQ) and the communication skills questionnaire of Christensen and Salluvay (1984). In the descriptive part, frequency distribution tables were used, and in the inferential part

of data analysis, mixed variance analysis with repeated measurements and Bonferroni's post hoc test and SPSS software version 26 were used.

Results

The F value and the significance level of the obtained value were calculated in the variable of communication skills ($F = 7.83$ and $P = 0.004$) and conflict resolution skills ($F = 6.91$ and $P = 0.006$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the independent variable i.e. premarital education based on the SYMBIS model has significantly changed the dependent variables i.e. communication skills and conflict resolution skills. This means that the changes made in the dependent variables were caused by the membership in the experimental group or the independent variable (premarital education based on the SYMBIS model).

Conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate the effect of pre-marital education based on the SYMBIS model on the communication and conflict resolution skills of engaged couples. The results of the data analysis, using repeated measures analysis of variance, showed that this therapeutic approach significantly affected the conflict resolution and communication skills of divorced women, and according to the results of the Bonferroni post-hoc test, this effect was also sustained in the follow-up stage. In further explaining the findings of the current research, it can be stated that the seventh session is about effectively resolving conflicts. Exercises such as "mind reading" and "identifying sensitive issues" are used to effectively resolve conflicts between couples. The "identifying private issues" exercise is designed to help couples clear their emotional residues and avoid unnecessary conflicts. This is an important technique for initiating effective conflict resolution, referred to as sharing in private issues, as it helps couples to share in thoughts and feelings that they have been hiding from each other (Rostami & Ghazalsafloo, 2017). The listening partner can only thank their spouse at the end of each sentence - just that. This allows couples to share their sensitive issues without fear of being blamed and defensive reactions. It also allows couples to receive criticisms in a confirming context. If one of the couples understands this process, this exercise can be performed daily to prevent the damage of accumulated feelings to the couple's relationship and to reveal conflicts (Wylie, 2012). Based on this, pre-marital education based on the SYMBIS model can enhance the communication and conflict resolution skills of engaged couples.

This research, like other studies, had limitations, which include: 1) The reliability of the questionnaire can bring self-error in generalizing the findings 2) Non-adherence to the principle of honesty in completing the questionnaire by participants 3) Use of purposive and convenient sampling methods 4) Inability to control all variables and implement quasi-experimental conditions. Therefore, caution must be observed in generalizing the results obtained from this study. It is recommended that researchers utilize this educational method for pre-marital counseling and also organize special training workshops for couple therapists and pre-marital counselors.

References

- Ammentorp, J., Bigi, S., Silverman, J., Sator, M., Gillen, P., Ryan, W., & Martin, P. (2020). Upscaling communication skills training—lessons learned from international initiatives. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Awada, G. M., Diab, H. B., & Faour, K. H. (2020). Effect of GI and Glogster on Improving the Intercultural Communication Skills in Higher Education. In

Multicultural Instructional Design: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 576-604). IGI Global.

- Bradford, K., Stewart, J. W., Pfister, R., & Higginbotham, B. J. (2016). Avoid falling for a jerk (ette): Effectiveness of the premarital interpersonal choices and knowledge program among emerging adults. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 42*(4), 630-644.
- Childs G, (2009). Marriage Preparation Education Programs: An Evaluation of Essential Elements of Quality. *All Theses and Dissertations*. 1744.
- Darbani, S. A., & Parsakia, K. (2022). The effectiveness of strength-based counseling on the reduction of divorced women's depression. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling, 4*(2), 28-32.
- Darbani, S. A., & Parsakia, K. (2022). The effectiveness of strength-based counseling on the self-esteem of marital conflicted women. *Psychology of Woman Journal, 3*(1), 46-55.
- Fatemi, V. A., Shafie Abadi, A., Khalatbari, J., & Farhangi, A. (2022). The effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy on communication skills of female students of high school. *Journal of Applied Family Therapy, 3*(4), 169-184.
- Ghezelseflo, M., & Rostami, M. (2021). Comparison of the Effectiveness of Gottman-Based Premarital Training and the SYMBIS Model on the Patterns and damages of Turkmen Engagement Couples. *Journal of Family Psychology, 8*(1), 47-64.
- Hajloo, N., Alizadehgoradel, J., Ghotbi, M., & Delavarghavam, S. (2014). Comparison of Love Dimensions based on Marriage Duration between Men and Women Married. *Family Counseling and Psychotherapy, 4*(1), 47-65.
- Hashemi, S., Behboodi, M., & Dokanei Fard, F. (2022). A Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge (PICK) Program and the Premarital SYMBIS Model in Improving the Fear of Marriage among Unmarried Girls. *jayps, 3*(1): 73-90.
- Henning, M. (2003). Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Questionnaire. Master Thesis, Auckland University of Technology.
- Karimi, A., Ahmadi, S., & Zaharakar, K. (2020). Effectiveness of Educating Marital Skills Based on Gottman's Approach on of Woman's communication patterns. *Counseling Culture and Psycotherapy, 11*(44), 253-278.
- Marks, J.P. (2007). *Christian premarital training in the local church setting: A study of the effectiveness of the SYMBIS model in reducing divorce and producing stable and satisfying marital relationships*. PhD thesis in Psychology, Virginia University.
- Mirahmadi, L. (2019). Investigating the Effect of the SYMBIS-Based Training Model on Yong Women's Marriage Expectations and Beliefs about Mate Selection, *Journal of Family Research, 15*(57), 7-24.
- Navabinejad, Sh., Rostami, M., & Parsakia, K. (2023). The mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between marital conflicts and tendency to marital infidelity in couples. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling, 5*(1): 1-8.
- Parrott L, & Parrott L. (2016). *Saving Your Marriage before It Starts* (SYMBIS): Seven Questions to Ask Before -- and After -- You Marry. Publisher: Zondervan; New, Expanded edition. 6-109.
- Parrott, L., & Parrott, L. (2006). *Saving Your Marriage Before it starts*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan
- Parrott, L., & Parrott, L. (2010). *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

- Rostami, M., & Ghezselflo, M. (2018). Examining the effects of the SYMBIS premarriage training on engaged couples' communication beliefs. *Journal of Family Psychology, 5*(1), 45-56.
- Rostami, M., Navabinejad, S., & Farzad, V. (2020). The effectiveness of premarital skills training model Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS) on patterns and damages of engagement couples. *Journal of Applied Family Therapy, 1*(1), 35-53.
- Sahebdel, H., asadi, M., & Shakouri, Z. (2014). The Effectiveness of communication skills to mother on decrease their sons addict high- risk behaviors. *Research in Clinical Psychology and Counseling, 3*(2), 65-80. doi: 10.22067/ijap.v3i2.12615
- Shaafizadeh, H., Najarpourian, S., & Sepehri Shamloo, Z. (2020). The effectiveness of premarital education base of SYMBIS model on the differentiation of self, marital attitudes and expectations in Single girls in University of Hormozgan, *Research in Clinical Psychology and Counseling, 9*(2), 120-140.
- Shamshirgaran, M., & Homaei, R. (2018). Investigation Of Relationship Between Relationship Skills and Its components With Couple Burnout In Married Employees In NIDC Ahvaz, *Rooyesh-e-Ravanshenasi, 7*(1), 111-134.
- Shayesteh Fard, Z., Sobhi Gharamaleki, N., & Zargham Hajabi, M. (2022). Designing an emotional intelligence model in reconciling emotional relationships with mediated communication skills in married women. *Journal of Applied Family Therapy, 3*(5), 55-83.
- Siaha, A., Banisi, P., & Mohammadiariya, A. (2021). Comparison of parenting styles, loneliness and communication skills in homeless and normal women. *Journal of Applied Family Therapy, 2*(2), 306-323.
- Vail, S. H. (2012). Reducing the divorce rate among Christians in America: Premarital counseling a prerequisite for marriage. *Journal Marriage and Family, 80*(16), 1179-1198.
- Weiss, J. M. (2014). *Marital Preparation, Experiences, and Personal Qualities in a Qualitative Study of Individuals in Great Marriages*. Master Dissertation in Family, Consumer, and Human Development. Utah State University
- Weisskirch, R. S., & Delevi, R. (2013). Attachment style and conflict resolution skills predicting technology use in relationship dissolution. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*(6), 2530-2534.
- Yilmaz, T., & Kalkan, M. (2010). The Effects of a Premarital Relationship Enrichment Program (SYMBIS) on Relationship Satisfaction. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 10* (3); 1911-1920.