



# The effectiveness of emotion regulation protocol on family functioning and marital commitment in couples with low resilience

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## Abstract

**Aim:** The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the effectiveness of emotional regulation protocol on family functioning and marital commitment in couples with low resilience. **Methods:** The research method was semi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group and a follow-up period. The statistical population of the research was made up of all the couples referring to education counseling centers in Kermanshah city in 2021 who had low resilience. 30 couples were selected as a sample using available sampling method and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. In order to collect data, Sikby's resilience questionnaires (2005), Epstein and Baldwin Bishop's family functioning (1983) and Adams and Jones' marital commitment (1997) were used. The experimental group received the emotional regulation protocol for 12 sessions (one session per week, each session 45 minutes). The meetings were held in groups. **Results:** During this time, the control group did not receive any intervention. Using analysis of covariance in the SPSS-25 software, the effectiveness of emotion regulation protocol on family functions and marital commitment was confirmed. **Conclusion:** Based on the results of this research, it is suggested to use the protocol of this research to improve marital commitment and family functions in family counseling centers. **Keywords:** spouses, resilience, emotional regulation, family functioning, marital commitment.

## Introduction

Marital relationship is one of the strong human relationships that has various consequences on the quality of life for couples, children, and other members of the family and society. Healthy couples create healthy families and healthy families contribute to a healthy society. Families face challenges and ups and downs throughout their lifespan that can jeopardize the peace and well-being of the family. One of these challenges is the lack of resilience. Resilience is defined as an individual's ability to maintain balance in the face of extremely unfavorable conditions, and the individual's ability to establish biological, psychological, and spiritual balance in the face of risky conditions and some sort of self-repair, accompanied by positive emotional, affective, and cognitive consequences. Over the past two decades, one of the topics that has attracted a lot of empirical and theoretical attention and effort is the emotion regulation. This interest and attention can be to some extent due to the significant role that emotion and emotional regulation play in external behaviors and various aspects of people's lives such as adaptation and stressful events (Trompou et al., 2018; Mahmoudi and Ghasemi, 2017). Emotion regulation refers to cognitive and behavioral conscious or unconscious methods used to manage and regulate emotions (Torl and Guntaz, 2018). Emotion regulation, such as the processes that people experience under the influence of their emotions, when they experience them, and how they experience and express them is an indication of one of the ways to change mental status (Michelsen et al., 2021).

The family's condition, as an important social institution, affects other social institutions and the overall state of society. One can look for one of the factors responsible for the happiness and development or collapse of a society in the nature of families. If the family cannot perform its basic functions properly, it will cause many problems in society. The importance of the family and its health has led many scientists in various fields to research and investigate this issue with various approaches (Pannahi and Zareian, 2012). On the other hand, with the increasing statistics of infidelity and divorce in society, the role of commitment in marital relationships has become very important in family and marriage studies. Commitment is an important structural element in marital life that plays a vital role in maintaining, stabilizing, and promoting the health of marriage, and its absence leads to the rupture of the marital contract and the instability of the family's foundation, ultimately resulting in the phenomenon of divorce. Therefore, the most important issue for increasing the level of commitment between couples is the correct understanding of this important structure for the maintenance and continuity of marriage. Given the aforementioned points, the present study aims to achieve the goal of influencing the functioning of the family and marital commitment in couples through emotion regulation training.

## Method

The research method was semi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group and a follow-up period. The statistical population of the research was made up of all the couples referring to education counseling centers in Kermanshah city in 2021 who had low resilience. 30 couples were selected as a sample using available sampling method and randomly assigned to experimental and control

groups. In order to collect data, Sikby's resilience questionnaires (2005), Epstein and Baldwin Bishop's family functioning (1983) and Adams and Jones' marital commitment (1997) were used. The experimental group received the emotional regulation protocol for 12 sessions (one session per week, each session 45 minutes). The meetings were held in groups.

### **Results**

During this time, the control group did not receive any intervention. Using analysis of covariance in the SPSS-25 software, the effectiveness of emotion regulation protocol on family functions and marital commitment was confirmed.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the data analysis showed that the emotion regulation protocol affects marital commitment in couples. From the results, it can be inferred that the emotion regulation protocol has an impact on couples' marital commitment. This finding can be explained as follows: When individuals find the ability to regulate their emotions, they can more easily deal with unpleasant and difficult situations, show better resilience, and try to solve problems through contemplation and reflection with greater calmness. As a result, in such situations, more appropriate behaviors are observed in couples, and instead of fighting and creating resentment, they try to resolve issues through dialogue. Such behaviors and relationships lead to less distance between them and greater satisfaction with each other, which in turn positively impacts the strengthening of their marital relationship and subsequent commitment.

Family function, communication, and problem-solving are among the functions of a family. People who have appropriate emotion regulation and show greater resilience in accidents and crises, can communicate more effectively with their spouse and family members, and their healthy and reassuring communication helps others better tolerate the situation both verbally and non-verbally, show greater adaptability and try to solve the existing problem together.

The results also show that the emotion regulation protocol has an impact on the emotional response and emotional involvement subscales of family functioning in couples. Regarding this finding, it can be said that when couples have a high ability to regulate their emotions, it is not unexpected that they respond to the emotional needs of all members in tense conditions, and in other words, show emotional responsiveness. In such situations, people are not only thinking about their own needs and desires, but emotional involvement with other members causes them to show interest and concern for each other, meaning that the family can respond appropriately to emotions in different situations.

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