

Marital Adjustment in Afghan Women through Life Skills Training: A Quasi-Experimental Study

Masoomah Kheirkhah^{1*}, Roqia Askari² and Fatemeh Farshad³

¹Associate Professor, Nursing Care Research Center (NCRC), Department of Reproductive Health and Midwifery, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

²Head of the Faculty of Midwifery, Alahlul Bayt Institute of Higher Education, Kabul, Afghanistan

³General Dentistry, Iran

***Corresponding Author:** Masoomah Kheirkhah, Associate Professor, Nursing Care Research Center (NCRC), Department of Reproductive Health and Midwifery, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

Received: May 28, 2021; **Published:** August 27, 2021

Abstract

Background and Aim: One of the effective and beneficial interventions to enhance marital adjustment is life skills training. This study aimed to determine the effect of life skills training on marital adjustment in Afghan women.

Methods: This quasi-experimental study was conducted with a control group. The research population included all abused women who referred to Rabia Balkhi and Ibn Sina hospitals in Kabul, Afghanistan. Rabieh Balkhi Center was chosen as the intervention center and another Center as the control. Sampling continued until completed sample size. The instrument used to collect the data was the Marital Adjustment Scale. The participants in the intervention group received routine care services and also attending a life skills training program held in 8 sessions each lasting 90 minutes. The items in the marital Adjustment Scale were completed by the participants in both groups before and immediately after the intervention and two months after the follow-up. The members of the control group received only routine care provided in the center. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS v.16 and descriptive and inferential statistics such as repeated measure analysis.

Results: The results showed that the participants in the two groups had no significant differences in terms of the demographic variables of the two groups. Besides, the two groups showed no significant differences in terms of marital adjustment subscales including dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affective expression before the intervention. However, the two groups showed significant differences in terms of marital adjustment subscales after the life skills training program groups ($P = 0.001$) and the effects of the training programs retained two months after the intervention.

Conclusion: This study showed that the life skills training program is effective on marital adjustment and this training has a lasting effect on improving marital adjustment.

Keywords: Life Skills Training; Marital Adjustment; Women; Afghanistan

Introduction

Marriage is a very important and valuable event that develops human relationships. Marital adjustment leads to a higher quality of life and satisfaction with the marital life [1]. Couples who have marital adjustment feel happy and satisfied with each other [2]. They can also meet each other's needs, including sexual needs by expressing mutual love and care. Such couples are satisfied with the quality of leisure time and manage their financial issues well [3]. Besides, marital adjustment contributes to the overall adjustment of the individual and increases self-esteem and is effective in improving the adjustment to social relationships [4].

Maladjustment in the family leads to frustration and anger, suspicion, emotional abuse, hostility, and blame. Marital maladjustment reduces a woman’s ability to have healthy relationships with her children and other people outside the family [5]. Family conflicts and maladjustment can also increase the divorce rate, the number of orphans and juvenile delinquency, leading to loneliness, family problems, job dissatisfaction, stress, and physical illness [6].

Marital adjustment is a long-term process. Understanding one’s spouse is an evolving process. Adjustment in women depends mainly on life satisfaction [7]. The more the couples agree with each other, the higher will be their adjustment [8]. Disruption of marital relationships is a serious threat to the survival and mental health of the family [9]. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of married women report significant communication problems that lead to a parallel relationship without intimacy [10]. Consequently, the energy of love turns into resentment and anger leading to many conflicts and finally maladjustment [11]. The quality of interaction between couples is a predictor for future marital adjustment [12]. Therefore, one of the major issues in women’s life empowerment programs is life skills training [13]. To prevent marital maladjustment, some strategies need to be used to improve the quality of the relationship and marital adjustment and guarantee the survival of the marital life. Therefore, learning life skills can help reduce negative relationships [14].

Life skills training programs if accompanied by empowerment can be effective in controlling stressful situations [15]. These training programs help women to know themselves and their husbands, develop empathy and intimacy, to communicate effectively, and solve problems intelligently [16]. Self-knowledge and effective assessment of the situation leads to selecting and involving in the desired behavior and avoiding irresponsible behavior and impulsive and irrational decisions to face fewer problems [17]. Life skills training helps promote the management of psychosocial abilities and dealing effectively with conflicts and managing life situations [18]. It also improves a sense of self-efficacy, inner control and self-esteem and has a positive effect on marital adjustment [19]. Given the lack of studies in Afghanistan and the low awareness of Afghan women due to long years of war and deprivation and the researcher’s familiarity with the research setting, the present study aims to determine the effect of life skills training on marital adjustment in Afghan women [20].

Methodology

The present study is a quasi-experimental study with a control group. The research setting was Rabieh Balkhi and Ibn Sina hospitals in Kabul, Afghanistan. Besides, the research population covered married women who referred to medical centers with complaints of domestic violence. The inclusion criteria were having formal marriage, not taking antidepressants and psychotropic drugs as reported by the participant, and the couple living together in the same house. The exclusion criterion was being absent in more than two sessions of the training program. The sample size was estimated by comparing the difference of marital adjustment scores before and after the intervention between the intervention and control groups using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{(z_{1-\alpha/2} + z_{1-\beta})^2 \delta^2}{(\mu_1 - \mu_2)^2}$$

At a confidence interval of (1-α) 95%, test power of (1-β) 80% and following previous studies, , , and as the differences in marital adjustment scores between the intervention and control groups before and after intervention groups, and as the mixed variances of the marital adjustment [21] score for the two groups were calculated. Accordingly, the sample size was estimated as follows:

$$n = \frac{(1.96 + 0.84)^2 42.66^2}{(8.48 - (-11.33))^2} = 36.36$$

However, taking a 10% dropout ratio, the number of the participants in each group was estimated as 40 persons. This research project was approved by the Ethics Committee of Iran University of Medical Sciences with the code of ethics (IR. IUMS.REC1397.215) and it was conducted based on a permit from the Iran University of Medical Sciences and the Ministry of Health. The intervention permit was also ob-

tained from the Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan under number 444799. The researchers visited the medical centers in person and invited the women who had been abused, harassed to participate in the study. Both hospital centers are geographically located in Kabul and the participants were similar in terms of socioeconomic and cultural conditions. To avoid communication between the participants in the two groups and eliminating the impossibility of exchanging information, Rabieh Balkhi Center was chosen as the intervention center and Ibn Sina Center as the control center by drawing lots. Sampling continued until the number of the participants selected was equal to the sample size. The intervention program was held in eight 90-minute training sessions, with a one-week interval each. The content of the training program including instructions on effective communication in the family, listening skills, empathy, acceptance, expressing needs and wants, expressing love, strengths and weaknesses of the relationship, and problem-solving skills. At the end of each session, the participants' questions were answered. The data were collected using a personal information questionnaire and the 32-item Marital Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1972). The scale contains four subscales including dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affective expression. The items in the scale are scored on a five-point Likert scale. The total score ranges from 0 to 151. Besides, a mean score of 100 indicates a higher level adjustment and a better relationship and a score lower than the means indicates a lower level of adjustment. This scale showed good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.96. Besides, the internal consistency values of the subscales including dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affective expression were equal to 0.94, 0.81, 0.90, and 0.73, respectively.

The quantitative and qualitative validity and reliability of the scale in the Dari language were evaluated with the help of experts and the women participating in the study. To determine the internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the scale. The scale was piloted on 30 women who met the inclusion criteria. The internal consistency of the scale was estimated as 0.84 using Cronbach's alpha and its reliability was assessed via test as equal to 82.

The collected data were analyzed with SPSS software (version 16) using descriptive and inferential statistics. The normality of the data was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. After confirmation of normality, the independent samples t-test, paired samples t-test, and SPSS v.16 and descriptive and inferential statistics such as independent t-test and repeated measure analysis were used to analyze the data at the 95% confidence level and the significance level of 0.05 ($P < 0.05$).

Results

The participants were assessed in terms of the demographic variables including age, the husband's age, marriage length, number of children, education, the husband's education, employment, the husband's occupation, income, the husband's income, spouse selection, interest in the spouse, drug addiction, the husband's drug addiction, trust/mistrust in the husband, addiction in the family members and their level of addiction and there were no differences between the two groups before the intervention.

Variable	Group	Intervention		Control		Independent t-test
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Consensus	Before	32/100	4/261	31/450	3/515	t = -3/33 df = 78 p = 0/162
	Immediately	47/100	6/647	31/600	3/571	t = -12/99 df = 78 p = 0/001
	Two months after the follow-up	47/600	6/045	32/100	2/844	t = -14/67 df = 78 p = 0/001
Satisfaction	Before	25/155	3/350	24/200	2/633	t = -2/86 df = 78 p = 0/089
	Immediately	35/200	4/071	24/250	2/648	t = -14/26 df = 78 p = 0/001
	Two months after the follow-up	35/500	3/515	24/500	1/987	t = -17/22 df = 78 p = 0/001
Cohesion	Before	13/700	2/266	13/100	1/598	t = -1/36 df = 78 p = 0/176
	Immediately	18/700	2/266	13/100	1/598	t = -12/77 df = 78 p = 0/001
	Two months after the follow-up	18/900	1/048	13/300	1/362	t = -14/39 df = 78 p = 0/001
affective expression	Before	10/700	1/870	10/100	1/392	t = -1/62 df = 78 p = 0/108
	Immediately	14/700	1/870	10/100	1/392	t = -12/47 df = 78 p = 0/001
	Two months after the follow-up	14/900	1/532	10/300	1/017	t = -15/81 df = 78 p = 0/001
Marital Adjustment	Before	91/800	15/517	83/750	8/825	t = -2/852 df = 78 p = 0/059
	Immediately	122/900	14/580	83/950	8/880	t = -14/429 df = 78 p = 0/001
	two months after the follow-up	124/300	12/698	85/300	6/764	t = -17/144 df = 78 p = 0/001

Table 1: A comparison of the mean scores marital adjustment subscales for the two groups before, immediately, and 2 months after the intervention.

There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of marital adjustment subscales before the intervention. However, the two groups showed significant differences in terms of marital adjustment subscales immediately after the intervention and 2 months after the intervention ($P = 0.001$).

Variable	Intervention steps	Intervention	Control	P-value		
		Mean \pm S.D	Mean \pm S.D	Time factor	Time (group) factor	Group agent
Consensus	Before	32/100 \pm 4/261	31/450 \pm 3/515	>0/001	>0/001	>0/001
	Immediately	47/100 \pm 6/647	31/600 \pm 3/571			
	Two months after the follow-up	47/600 \pm 6/045	32/100 \pm 2/844			
Satisfaction	Before	25/155 \pm 3/350	24/200 \pm 2/633	>0/001	>0/001	>0/001
	Immediately	35/200 \pm 4/071	24/250 \pm 2/648			
	Two months after the follow-up	35/500 \pm 3/515	24/500 \pm 1/987			
Cohesion	Before	13/700 \pm 2/266	13/100 \pm 1/598	>0/001	>0/001	>0/001
	Immediately	18/700 \pm 2/266	13/100 \pm 1/598			
	Two months after the follow-up	18/900 \pm 2/048	13/300 \pm 1/362			
Affective expression	Before	10/700 \pm 1/870	10/100 \pm 1/392	>0/001	>0/001	>0/001
	Immediately	14/700 \pm 1/870	10/100 \pm 1/392			
	Two months after the follow-up	14/900 \pm 1/532	10/300 \pm 1/018			
Marital Adjustment	Before	79/600 \pm 9/345	78/850 \pm 7/921	>0/001	>0/001	>0/001
	Immediately	115/700 \pm 13/375	79/050 \pm 7/794			
	two months after the follow-up	116/900 \pm 11/753	80/200 \pm 6/140			

Table 2: A comparison of the marital adjustment components between the two groups before, immediately, and 2 months after the intervention.

The changes in the marital adjustment components before, immediately after, and two months after the intervention in the intervention and control groups were assessed using the repeated measures ANOVA. The results showed that the interaction effect of group-time for the research variables was significant ($P < 0.001$).

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of life skills training on the marital adjustment of Afghan women. The results showed that the training program had a positive effect on the marital adjustment of Afghan women immediately after the intervention and 2 months after the training program in the intervention group. Similarly, Naeem and Sharif (2015) and Askari, *et al.* (2017) confirmed the effect of training on improving the relationship and marital adjustment of women. Establishing a good relationship within the family helps to increase social and personal adjustment between family members. Besides, it seems people’s need for life skill training to have better marital adjustment can motivate them to acquire these skills and increase their empowerment. This helps women feel be satisfied with their marital relationship and increase marital cohesion and consensus by expressing more love and respect for the needs and desires of their partner.

Ahmadvand (2016) showed that the skills retained one month after the completion of the training sessions, as indicated in the present study. It was also shown that empathy training led to an increase in marital adjustment, a decrease in marital boredom, and an increase in marital adjustment with better communication, supporting the findings of the present study [22]. By acquiring life skills, women can acquire a set of abilities and can use them in their marital life and benefit from their good effects in their personal life. Besides, the retention of marital adjustment is one of the significant strengths [23]. Kheikhah study about The Effect of Group Counseling on Infertility Adjustment of infertile women in Tabriz Al-Zahra clinic showed that group counseling affects increasing adjustment in infertile woman.

In another study, Bitaghsir, *et al.* (2015) examined the effectiveness of emotion-oriented couple therapy training on marital satisfaction and marital adjustment of married women in Isfahan. The results showed that the training program formed a deep attachment bond between husband and wife and improved intimacy, marital satisfaction, and affective expression between them [24]. In a recent study, there was an increase in affective expression and marital satisfaction, confirming the results of the present study. Issa Nejad and Alizadeh (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of couple coping training on marital adjustment and couple coping strategies [25]. Their results indicated that the training program affected agreement, affective expression, marital satisfaction, and dyadic cohesion ($P = 0.001$), as shown in the present study. Life skills training can increase marital adjustment in marital conflicts and has a positive and significant effect on marital adjustment to these conflicts.

A study by Arab Bafrani, *et al.* (2014) highlighted the positive effect of training on increasing marital adjustment components including dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affective expression [26]. The present study also highlighted the positive effects of life skills training on marital adjustment. Moreover, Davoodvand, *et al.* (2018) showed the effectiveness of education on marital adjustment and persistence of the effectiveness in the follow-up phase [27]. These findings are consistent with the observation made in the present study.

Conclusion

The training intervention in this study led to a higher marital adjustment among Afghan women. Therefore, given the important role of the family in shaping the personality of individuals and their future and its effects on marital relationships and family survival, training interventions can increase marital adjustment among women in Afghan families who are struggling with various problems caused by war and insecurity and economic problems.

Funding Support

This study was supported partly by a grant from Iran University of Medical Sciences, UNFPA Office and Italian Embassy in Iran.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the article, have no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgments

This article is the result of the master's thesis of midwifery education at the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Iran University of Medical Sciences with the financial support of the UNFPA Office. The authors wish to thank these organizations, the Italian Embassy, all of women participating in the project, the Center of Rabia Balkhi and Ibn Sina hospitals in Kabul, Afghanistan Vice-chancellor for International Affairs and Research of Iran University of Medical Sciences.

Bibliography

1. Foladi F, et al. "The Effectiveness of Communication Skills Training on Improving the Quality of Life of Married Women". *Quarterly Journal of Education and Evaluation* 6.21 (2013): 127-141.
2. Fotoohi S, et al. "Comparison of the effectiveness of Farahijan-based couple therapy with narrative couple therapy on marital adjustment and boredom of conflicting couples". *Quarterly of Counseling Culture and Psychotherapy Allameh Tabataba'i University* 9.34 (2018): 77-101.
3. Jonaid ER, et al. "Comparing the marital satisfaction in infertile and fertile women referred to the public clinics in Mashhad". *The Iranian Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology* 12 (2009): 6-7.
4. Arshad M, et al. "Marital adjustment and life satisfaction among early and late marriages". *Journal of Education and Practice* 5.17 (2017): 83-90.
5. Aklimunnessa K, et al. "Prevalence and correlates of domestic violence by husbands against wives in Bangladesh: evidence from a national survey". *Journal of Men'S Health and Gender* 4.1 (2007): 52-63.
6. Akhtari A, et al. "The impact of spiritual counseling on domestic violence in pregnant women: a clinical trial". *Nursing And Midwifery Journal* 17.6 (2019): 411-420.
7. Banani M. "Role and efficacy of cultural training on anger management skills in reducing family violence A Case study in Tehran" (2016).
8. Naeim M and Sharif AR. "The efficacy of life skills training on marital adjustment of women for the prevention of domestic violence". *Shenakht Journal of Psychology and Psychiatry* 3.2 (2016): 21-32.
9. Darabi S, et al. "The effectiveness of life skills training on marital adjustment". *Journal of Social Work* 1.2 (2014): 121-143.
10. Shamsi M and Bayati A. "Frequency and severity of domestic violence in pregnant women". *Journal of Gorgan University of Medical Sciences* 12.4 (2011).
11. Mohamadian Z, et al. "Provide and psychometric properties of "coping with Domestic violence againts women". Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University of Medical sciences (2016).
12. Decker B. "How to communication effectively". Tehran: Dayere: Ramezani, B editor (2000).
13. Baharloo G, et al. "Evaluate the efficacy of positive couple therapy and integrative behavioral couple therapy on marital adjustment". *Woman and Family Studies* 7.3 (2019): 83-107.
14. Al Kibria GM, et al. "Determinants of early neonatal mortality in Afghanistan: an analysis of the Demographic and Health Survey 2015". *Globalization and Health* 14.1 (2018): 1-12.
15. Baghaie Lakeh M and Khalatbari J. "Efficacy of anger management teaching on anger self-regulation and impulsivity in mothers of elementary school boy students in Rasht". *Journal of Holistic Nursing and Midwifery* 20.1 (2010): 1-9.
16. Miller S, et al. "Education of communication of marital skills Tehran". Roshd (2017).
17. Askari R, et al. "The effect of relationship improvement program training on increasing marital adjustment of low-income women". *Scientific Quarterly of Consulting Research* 72.18 (2020): 184-200.
18. Mophmal Csoc. "Demographic and Health Survey Key Finding" (2015).

19. AS G., *et al.* "Effectiveness of communications skills training on increasing marital adjustment of addicted spouses and preventing the return of male addiction in Esfahan" (2008).
20. Akser T. "Afghanistan in 2019 a survey of the Afghan people The Asia Foundation (2019).
21. Babae SN and Ghahari S. "Effectiveness of communication skills training on intimacy and marital adjustment among married women". *International Journal of Medical Research and Health Sciences* 5.8 (2016): 375-380.
22. Ahmadvand E. "Evaluation of the effectiveness of empathy training in reducing marital boredom and increasing adjustment in married women in the city". *The Journal of new Advances in Behavioral Science* 3.21 (2018): 40-60.
23. Kheirkhah M., *et al.* "The Effect of Group Counseling on Infertility Adjustment of infertile women in Tabriz Al-Zahra clinic". *The Iranian Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Infertility* 17.113 (2014): 7-14.
24. Akhavan-Bitaghsir Z., *et al.* "The effectiveness of emotional focused couple therapy on satisfaction and marital adjustment in couples". *Journal of Research in Behavioural Sciences* 14.3 (2016): 324-330.
25. Isanejad O and Alizade Z. "The Effectiveness of Couples Coping Enhancement Training (CCET) on Marital Adjustment and Marital Coping Strategies". *Journal of Applied Psychological Research* 11.1 (2020): 67-85.
26. Arab bafrani H., *et al.* "The effectiveness of spirituality training on marital adjustment of couples". *Biquarterly Journal of Studies in Islam and Psychology* 7.12 (2013): 95-112.
27. Davoodvandi M., *et al.* "Comparison of the effectiveness of Guttman and emotion-based couple therapy approaches on couples' adjustment in the family". *Cultural and Educational Quarterly of Women and Family* 1343 (2018): 117-132.

Volume 10 Issue 9 September 2021

©All rights reserved by Masoomeh Kheirkhah., *et al.*