



## **The Effectiveness of Ellis Couple Therapy Training (The Rational-Emotional-Behavioral Approach) on Reducing the Marital Burnout\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present research was performed to study the effectiveness of Ellis couple therapy training (the rational-emotional-behavioural approach) on lowering the marital Burnout in Bandar Abbas county couples. The method of this semi experimental survey was the pretest-posttest type with a control group. The research sample composed of 30 couples referred to Bandar Abbas counselling centres in the year ending on March 21 2013 who were placed in test and control group randomly. The dependent variable in this research was the marital Burnout which was evaluated by the marital Burnout questionnaire. The independent variable was also Ellis couple therapy training (the rational-emotional-behavioural approach) which was taught to the test group in 8 sessions. The co-variance analysis was also used to study the research hypotheses. The obtained results showed that the marital Burnout average scores for the test group's post-test was significantly lower than the one for the control group. The obtained results express that Ellis couple therapy can be applied as an effective method in lowering marital Burnout in a short period.

**Keywords:** Ellis Couple Therapy Training (the Rational-Emotional-Behavioural Approach), Marital Burnout.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Marital Burnout is a painful state of body, emotional and mental wariness and affects those who expect a dreamlike love to give meaning to their lives. This state occurs when then realize despite all of their efforts, their relationship has not given and will not give meaning to their life [1]. According to Lingern, Burnout is body, emotional and mental languor and a result of a lack of proportion between expectations and reality. Burnout occurs due to an unfulfilled love [2].

Marital Burnout occurs due to a set of unreal expectations, illogical thoughts, and the life's ups and downs. In contrast to the idea of often clinical approaches used in couple therapy, couple Burnout is not due to a problem in one of them or both. Love Burnout is a gradual process which rarely occurs suddenly. In fact, intimacy and love fade gradually and a general tiredness happens afterwards that in its most serious form, Burnout associates with a relationship breakup [3].

Many factors play a role in marital Burnout. Illogical and unreal expectations are one of them. Marital Burnout arises from a lack of proportion between realities and expectations and its amount depends on the amount of couple's adaptation and their beliefs. Burnout starts with the relationship breakup and the growth of awareness and paying attention to those things that are not pleasant as before, and if any actions are not taken to prevent the advancement of this process at this level, everything goes from bad to worse [4]. Burnout rarely starts suddenly and usually arises gradually and hardly from unpleasant phenomena or even a few distressing shocks [5]. In fact, the accumulation of the daily life's despairs and tensions cause wariness and results in Burnout finally.

One of the appropriate approaches of lowering the Burnout is couple therapy in Ellis way (the rational-emotional-behavioral approach) which is counted as a cognitive therapy. The cognitive therapy is a general term used for a number of therapy methods which emphasizes destructive and false thoughts as the main causes of

emotional behavioral problems and interpersonal conflicts, and tries to change the destructive and negative thoughts using different techniques to cure the individual. The curing process is designed in a way that the illogical beliefs are identified, the relationships between cognition, emotion, and behaviors are determined and the contrasting observations study the illogical thoughts to replace the realistic changes with the illogical beliefs of ideas, and become succeeded in obtaining a solution for conflicts and adaptation [6].

A survey was performed by Balver [7] to study the marital Burnout with illogical beliefs in 192 nurses. The results showed that both the Burnout thoughts ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $451.0 = r$ ) and Burnout behaviors ( $r = 0.350$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were positively correlated with illogical thoughts and behaviors. Another survey was performed by Cory with the purpose of studying Burnout among the family and marital therapists. The study included 300 family and marital therapists in Western America. The demographic variables related to clinical experiences, gender, the number of clients, and marital status was studied. The results showed that gender and the number of clients were the variables which show a significant relationship with Burnout [8].

Bakhtiarpoor et al. in a survey named "The Relationship between Special dependence on the spouse and the Illogical beliefs with Marital Burnout in the Married Teachers of Ahvaz" reached this conclusion that there is a positive significant relationship between special dependence on spouse and the illogical beliefs with marital Burnout in the Married Teachers: and also, (the anxious and excitement dependence) among the components of special dependence on spouse, and the components of illogical beliefs (the desire for being blamed), predicts the teachers marital Burnout significantly [9].

Regarding the already mentioned points, the purpose of this research was to study the effectiveness of Ellis couple therapy training (the rational-emotional-behavioral approach) on lowering the marital Burnout, and to take a step in improving the couple's relationship by changing it. It was to study whether Ellis couple therapy training (the rational-emotional-behavioral approach) is effective on lowering the couples' marital Burnout or not.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research is among the semi experimental designs named pretest-posttest type with a control group. This research's population included couples referred to counseling center in Bandar Abbas City in the year ending on March 21, 2013 of which 30 voluntary people (15 couples) placed in test group, and the same number were placed in the and control group. Conditions for entering the research: 1. Presence of both in all sessions together; 2. active participation in discussions and exercises; 3. being busy living with the spouse; 4. having at least a diploma degree.

### Intervention method

After giving the necessary explanations and coordinating about the research design, number of sessions, each session's duration, and the workshop subject with the counseling center and hygiene houses' managers, the advertisement of this training workshop was installed at these centers. After enrolling the members and reaching the number to the desired amount, the members were placed in the test and the control group randomly. After an acquaintance, their trust and cooperation attraction, expression of the general purposes of holding the workshop, and also the conditions of entering the workshop, and after determining the members of the two groups, the pretest was performed for both, and a total of 8 90-minute sessions were held for the test group, twice a week. Ellis couple therapy training was performed for the test group, but the control group was not subject to the independent variable in this period. Both groups were also measured using the posttest at the end of these sessions. A summary of the training sessions based on the Ellis couple therapy approach bellow:

1. First session: acquaintance, determining the purposes, familiarity with group laws, and an introductory discussion. Answering the client's questions and ambiguities, obtaining commitments from the couples.
2. Second session: studying the couple's views on factors of marital conflict, correcting their ideas and viewpoints according to the REBCT theory and ABC training.
3. Third session: helping couples to discover the illogical beliefs of themselves and their spouses, recognizing the illogical reactions and behaviors, training the methods of facing the illogical beliefs.
4. Forth session: measuring the amount of skill obtaining and couples' progress in discovering the illogical beliefs and recognition and choice of the logical beliefs, training the contention method to correct and change the illogical beliefs.
5. Fifth session: making couples familiar with the effect of using the logical or illogical words in creating different feelings after their self-talk. And a table is given to them to be filled out and given to the counselor the next session.
6. Sixth session: Training the conceptual imagination to increase people's power to control excitements and correcting their illogical beliefs, training the negative excitement controlling method and abandoning the habits causing conflict and Burnout.
7. Seventh session: Training relaxation to control anger and stress making behaviors. Training the correct method of making a relationship, evaluating the obtained results, ending the counseling .

## 8. Eighth session: Performing the post-test.

### Tools:

The marital Burnout questionnaire was used to gather information in the present research. This questionnaire consists of 21 items 17 of which include negative terms such as tiredness, sadness and being valueless, and four others include positive terms such as being happy or being full of energy. This scale includes the three main components of body wariness (tiredness, weakness, insomnia, etc.), emotional wariness (depression, disappointment, entanglement, etc.), and mental wariness (being valueless, despair, anger to spouse, etc.). The scoring of this scale is performed in Lickert's 7-step scale in a range of 1 (never) to 7 (always). The higher the score of the tested will be, the higher the amount of Burnout is. The reliability of this scale was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha in a range of 91.0 to 93.0. Na'im [5] has calculated the reliability of this scale using the Cronbach's Alpha and bisection 85.0 and 82.0 respectively. Naderi obtained the reliability of this scale using the Cronbach's Alpha and bisection 78.0 and 81.0 respectively. In the present research, the Cronbach's Alpha was obtained 90.0 for the whole questionnaire [10].

## RESULTS

Observing tables 1 and 2, it can be concluded that the posttest scores of the test group is decreased compared with those of the control group. The covariance analysis test is used to study the significance of these changes. The covariance analysis was used to analyze the data and the results are summarized in table 3.

The results of table 3 determine that there is a difference between the test and the control group in marital Burnout test. In other words, the independent variable of couple therapy in Ellis method has resulted in a significant decrease in marital Burnout. Therefore, the research hypothesis is verified.

**Table 1.** Descriptive results of the research

Variable		Pretest		Posttest		Prevention	
		Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
Marital Burnout	Test Group	80.92	13.17	50.79	85.17	60.77	53.13
	Control Group	36.67	10.22	76.66	49.22		

**Table 2.** The results of the Lewin test to study the equality of the variances

Variable	F	Freedom Degree 1	Freedom Degree 2	Significance Level
Marital Burnout	11.38	2	58	0.29

**Table 3.** A summary of the analysis results

Scale	Chi2 Average	F	Significance Level	Amount of Effect
Marital Burnout	3950.27	18.34	0	0.243

## DISCUSSION

The research findings show that couple therapy in Ellis method has decreased the amount of couple's Burnout in the posttest stage. This finding is in line with the research findings of Balver [7] Cory [8], Bakhtiarpoor et al. [9]. The result of this research is also in line with Payens [4] which expresses the predicting roll of positive view to the life in marital Burnout. It means that the negative and illogical beliefs can predict marital Burnout in women. It is also in line with Azkhosh et al. [6] research which remarked there is a significant relationship between the illogical beliefs and the marital Burnout.

The findings of this research accords with the original Ellis theory which claims that a decrease in illogical beliefs using cognitive, behavioral, and emotional techniques causes a decrease in marital Burnout. As Ellis believed, it is highly possible that some couples become involved with special tendencies in their behaviors and actions effected by the illogical beliefs which cause their dissatisfaction in marital life. He knows these illogical thoughts the source of many mental problems and disorders. He says there are a set of these unrealistic expectations and thoughts and the ups and downs of life that marital disputes and Burnouts occur [9]. It is offered that the couple therapy classes in Ellis method are held in the counseling centers for couples having marital Burnout.

It is necessary to mention at the end that the population of the present research was couples having at least a diploma degree. This causes some limitations in providing the findings. Therefore its generalization to other populations must be avoided. It is recommended that similar researches are performed in other part of the country that better decisions can be made on the generalization of these findings.

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