

Comparison of the Effectiveness of Olson's Marital Enrichment Training, Lazarus's Multimodal Therapy, and Islamic Approach-Based Marital Skills Training on Marital Satisfaction and Conflicts Among Couples

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to compare the effectiveness of Olson's marital enrichment training, Lazarus's multimodal therapy, and Islamic approach-based marital skills training on marital satisfaction and conflicts among couples in Isfahan.

Methods: The present study is applied in terms of its objective and quasi-experimental with a pretest-posttest design, involving three experimental groups and one control group. The statistical population included couples who referred to psychology centers and clinics in Isfahan during the second half of 2023. Among them, 80 participants (40 couples) with low compatibility and dissatisfaction with marital life were selected using a non-random convenience sampling method. They were then randomly and equally divided into four groups of 20 individuals (10 couples per group). The measurement tools included the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (Fowers & Olson, 1998), the Marital Conflict Questionnaire (Sanaei & Barati, 2008), and the intervention packages for multimodal therapy based on Lazarus's approach, Olson's marital enrichment program, and Islamic approach-based marital skills training (Salarifar, 2021). Each experimental group underwent eight 90-minute training sessions.

Findings: The results indicated that all three educational-therapeutic packages were effective in reducing conflicts and increasing marital satisfaction.

Conclusion: Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that qualitative research be conducted to identify the factors contributing to marital dissatisfaction and conflicts. Subsequently, any of these three therapeutic and educational approaches can be utilized for more in-depth resolution of couples' issues.

Keywords: Olson's Marital Enrichment Training, Lazarus's Multimodal Therapy, Islamic Approach-based Marital Skills Training, Marital Satisfaction, Marital Conflict.

1. Introduction

Marital relationships have undergone significant changes in recent years, making it challenging for many couples across cultures and societies to maintain and sustain their marriages. Divorce rates, the most reliable indicator of marital distress, highlight the difficulties couples face in achieving marital satisfaction (Abedi et al., 2024). In Iran, the ratio of divorces to marriages has shown a growing trend. Studies indicate that many couples experience weak communication, with the majority of complaints stemming from their communication problems (Gargari, 2024; Navabinejad et al., 2024). Ineffective communication patterns in marital relationships drastically reduce marital satisfaction and increase the level of marital conflicts and dissatisfaction (Abedi et al., 2024). Marital conflicts weaken relationships, increase marital problems, and hinder the fulfillment of natural needs between spouses, posing risks for various psychological disorders and, if persistent, may lead to separation (Salah et al., 2024; Yu, 2024). Therefore, identifying the factors influencing couples' relationships and communication behaviors is of paramount importance (Zhang et al., 2023). The most critical quality for couples is the ability to respond positively, constructively, and effectively (Yu, 2021). Stable and healthy marital relationships have far-reaching positive effects on stress regulation, emotional regulation, life expectancy, and physical and mental health.

Maintaining harmony and stability in marital relationships, especially during challenges and relational threats, is not an easy task. At the beginning of marriage, couples generally report high levels of satisfaction, but serious problems often emerge within the first few weeks and months of shared life, leading to a gradual decline in marital satisfaction. If unresolved, these issues may threaten the quality and stability of the marital relationship (Hamburg & Pronk, 2015).

Lack of awareness of marital values, extreme violence, poor understanding of life skills, maladaptive emotions and behaviors, and engagement in inappropriate actions reflect deficits in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills among couples. Cognitive components involve understanding and recognizing spousal needs, effective communication, and conflict resolution. Lack of awareness about life and marital skills creates a fertile ground for tension, dissatisfaction, and conflict in marital life (Eslamzadeh et al., 2019). Unresolved conflicts lead to increased resentment and negative emotions, resulting in decreased willingness to engage in

positive behaviors toward one's spouse and an inclination toward inappropriate actions in marital life (Shahmoradi, 2017). Distressed couples often overlook their strengths, focusing instead on conflicts and problems. It is therefore crucial to identify barriers to intimacy honestly (Olson, 1999, 2011a, 2011b; Olson & Fowers, 1993; Olson & Olson, 2014).

Insufficient understanding and inappropriate decisions and behaviors in marital life are significant and cannot be overlooked. To address such challenges and preserve family stability while reducing divorce rates in civil society, psychological education and therapeutic interventions are effective solutions. Among these approaches, Lazarus's Multimodal Therapy is noteworthy. As an eclectic therapeutic approach, it addresses patients' specific problems through tailored techniques (Sui et al., 2014). This holistic and comprehensive therapy integrates cognitive-behavioral methods and techniques from other theories, depending on the case (Harris et al., 2021).

In addition, one of the most important cultural considerations in Iran is the emphasis on the rich Islamic culture. Islamic teachings hold great potential for improving marital relationships and ensuring happiness (Janbozorgi, 2019). These teachings underscore the importance of spiritual beliefs, such as faith in God, modeling virtuous individuals, and belief in the afterlife, at various stages of marital life (Salari Far, 2021). They also emphasize spiritual rewards for fostering intimacy and strengthening marital bonds, motivating couples to take actions that enhance their relationship (Sanagooi Zadeh, 2021). Marital conflict occurs when spouses fail to align cognitively, behaviorally, emotionally, structurally, and spiritually. Troubled relationships reflect a failure to achieve harmony and cohesion in these dimensions.

Research into marital life based on Islamic teachings reveals that most studies focus solely on aspects such as ethics and behavior, while Islamic teachings comprise a coordinated set of material and spiritual dimensions, including physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical, legal, cognitive, and interpersonal elements, all of which influence marital skills (Salari Far, 2021). As a life-guiding system, Islam emphasizes the primacy of family and considers it the cornerstone of human upbringing. It links societal well-being to the soundness of familial structures, defining the purpose of marriage as fulfilling emotional and spiritual needs, including achieving tranquility (Hosseini Zand et al., 2012; Jodiri et al., 2017).

Training verbal and non-verbal communication skills is an effective method for strengthening marital bonds and enriching familial relationships. Teaching proper communication principles increases couples' compatibility in married life, fostering emotional growth and maturity. Islamic counseling emphasizes marital stability, viewing love and affection as the foundation of marital life (Quran, Romans: 21) and considering tranquility as the secret to marital happiness (Quran, A'raf: 189). Intimacy, as a significant factor in marital satisfaction, is rooted in honesty. A lack of honesty between spouses fosters mistrust and suspicion within the family, laying the groundwork for conflict (Quran, Nahl: 125). Optimism, mutual rights (Quran, Baqarah: 228), and adherence to spiritual values significantly influence marital satisfaction.

Given the importance of the subject and the lack of research comparing these three therapeutic approaches—Olson's marital enrichment training, Lazarus's Multimodal Therapy, and Islamic-based marital skills training—this study aims to compare their effectiveness in addressing marital conflicts, enhancing satisfaction, and improving interpersonal skills based on Islamic teachings among couples in Isfahan.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study is applied in terms of its purpose and quasi-experimental in nature, employing a pretest-posttest design with three experimental groups and one control group. The research aimed to evaluate the effects of three educational-therapeutic methods—Olson's marital enrichment training, Lazarus's multimodal therapy, and Islamic approach-based marital skills training—on marital satisfaction and conflict among couples.

The study population included couples who visited psychology centers and clinics in Isfahan during the second half of 2023. Based on semi-experimental study requirements, where a minimum of 15 participants per group suffices (Delavar, 2019), a sample of 80 individuals (40 couples) was selected, accounting for potential attrition. These participants were identified through clinic records as having low compatibility and marital dissatisfaction. The sample was chosen using non-random convenience sampling and voluntary participation, and subsequently, the participants were randomly assigned to four equal groups of 20 individuals (10 couples per group). The groups were matched based on age and education level.

Before random assignment and intervention implementation, all participants completed the Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire and the Marital Conflict Questionnaire as pretests. Following the interventions, each group completed the questionnaires again as posttests. Notably, due to the participants' enthusiasm after receiving detailed explanations from the researcher, most individuals remained engaged throughout the study, with only a few missing one or two sessions. All questionnaires were completed thoroughly, with no missing data.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Holding at least a bachelor's degree.
2. Absence of severe physical illnesses.
3. No history of diagnosed psychological disorders, hospitalization in psychiatric facilities, or use of psychiatric medication.
4. Not concurrently participating in other educational or psychological therapy programs.
5. Providing informed consent for study participation.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Withdrawing consent or expressing dissatisfaction with study participation.
2. Missing more than two sessions.
3. Providing incomplete responses to pretest questionnaires.
4. Concurrent participation in other psychotherapy programs or workshops.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Marital Satisfaction

The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, developed by Olson (1998), consists of 47 items across 12 subscales: conventional response, marital satisfaction, personality issues, marital communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, parenting, family and friends, egalitarian roles, and religious orientation. Responses are measured on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), with scores ranging from 1 to 5 per item. Mirkheshti (1996) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92, indicating high internal consistency. Mahdavian (1997) found test-retest reliability coefficients of 0.937 for men, 0.944 for women, and 0.94 for both genders combined over a one-week interval. Subscale reliability scores for women and men ranged from 0.63 to 0.87. In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the ENRICH questionnaire was calculated at 0.95.

2.2.2. Marital Conflict

Developed by Sanaei Zaker and Barati (2008), this questionnaire assesses seven primary dimensions of marital conflict across 42 items. Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale, with a total score range of 42 to 210. Higher scores indicate greater marital conflict, while lower scores reflect better marital relationships. Sanaei (2008) reported acceptable content validity. After initial item analysis, 13 of the original 55 items were removed. Khazaei (2006) found significant correlations ($r = 0.31$ to 0.82 , $p < 0.01$) between the total conflict score and all subscales. Soleimani (2013) standardized the questionnaire on a sample of 30 individuals, reporting a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71 for the overall scale and subscale reliabilities ranging from 0.60 to 0.81 (Sanai, 2018; Sanai & Bagherian-Nejad, 2003). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha values for subscales ranged from 0.76 to 0.85, with an overall reliability of 0.78.

2.3. Interventions

2.3.1. Lazarus Multimodal Therapy

This intervention follows Lazarus's multimodal therapy approach, which evaluates seven interconnected modalities (behavior, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal relationships, and biology) to identify the specific issues faced by participants. The therapy aims to provide targeted strategies to address marital dissatisfaction and conflicts using an integrated therapeutic approach (Harris et al., 2021; Iranizadeh et al., 2020; Lazarus, 2020; Lazarus, 1989).

Session 1: Introduction and Preliminary Assessment

Participants are introduced to the group goals and guidelines. The session includes setting the group charter, establishing a therapeutic contract, and conducting an initial assessment interview. Participants complete questionnaires on marital satisfaction and conflict. The goal is to build trust, clarify expectations, and assess baseline marital issues.

Session 2: Bridging and Tracing Strategies

This session identifies the specific sequence of the seven modalities relevant to each participant. It explores accelerators, sustaining factors, and triggers contributing to marital issues using a detailed life history questionnaire.

Session 3: Personality Profile and Treatment Planning

Participants complete a profile of personality dimensions and discuss a treatment plan tailored to their needs. Skills and techniques corresponding to the identified modalities are

introduced, focusing on enhancing self-awareness and marital interactions.

Session 4: Emotional Modality Training

The session addresses participants' emotional responses, aiming to reduce the impact of unresolved conflicts. Couples are guided in recognizing their role in marital tensions and identifying the emotional triggers contributing to dissatisfaction.

Session 5: Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation training focuses on deep breathing and mindfulness exercises. Participants practice identifying early signs of tension and use relaxation to manage stress effectively, enhancing emotional regulation in marital contexts.

Session 6: Mental Imagery Training

Participants learn to create and strengthen positive mental images of themselves and their partners. Visualization techniques are used to foster a positive outlook on marital interactions and develop constructive self-concepts.

Session 7: Cognitive Techniques

This session emphasizes cognitive restructuring to address pervasive anxiety and stress linked to marital conflict. Participants write and reflect on how positive mental imagery can improve emotional regulation and reduce psychological strain.

Session 8: Interpersonal Communication Skills

The final session focuses on teaching effective interpersonal communication skills. Participants explore Maslow's hierarchy of needs to understand the role of communication in fulfilling marital needs. The session concludes with a discussion on marital satisfaction and strategies to sustain progress.

2.3.2. Islamic-Based Marital Skills Training

This protocol incorporates Islamic principles and teachings, emphasizing spirituality and mutual respect to improve marital relationships. Grounded in Quranic teachings, it highlights the roles of love, tranquility, and shared purpose in marriage (Lotfi, 2015; Lotfi & Heidari, 2019).

Session 1: Introduction and Framework

Participants are introduced to the objectives and Islamic principles underpinning the sessions. A group contract is established to ensure commitment and active participation.

Session 2: Love and Intimacy from an Islamic Perspective

Participants explore Quranic teachings on love and intimacy, identifying factors that strengthen or weaken marital bonds. Skills are taught to enhance emotional intimacy and discover personal and relational strengths.

Session 3: Expressing and Listening Skills in Islamic Context

Communication techniques are framed within Islamic ethics. Participants practice expressing needs and listening actively, emphasizing mutual respect and understanding.

Session 4: Problem-Solving in Marriage

Problem-solving strategies are introduced, integrating Islamic teachings on patience, self-reflection, and collaborative decision-making.

Session 5: Enhancing Sexual Relationships within Islamic Values

Participants discuss the significance of sexual relationships, guided by Islamic principles that promote intimacy and mutual satisfaction.

Session 6: Financial Management and Religious Values

The session addresses financial planning, linking it to Islamic values of stewardship and responsibility. Participants discuss the role of religious beliefs in shaping family finances and raising children.

Session 7: Family and Parenting Roles in Islam

Participants learn about balanced parenting and the importance of flexibility and resilience in family dynamics, grounded in Quranic principles.

Session 8: Conclusion and Reflection

The final session reflects on the teachings, participants' progress, and the integration of Islamic principles into their marital lives. Participants discuss sustaining improvements and fostering long-term marital satisfaction.

2.3.3. *Olson Marital Enrichment Program*

This program draws on Olson's model of marital enrichment, emphasizing effective communication, emotional intimacy, and problem-solving skills. Sessions are designed to enhance marital satisfaction and stability through practical, interactive activities (Lotfi, 2015; Lotfi & Heidari, 2019; Olson, 1999, 2011a, 2011b; Olson & Fowers, 1993; Olson & Olson, 2014).

Session 1: Introduction and Overview

Participants are introduced to the objectives, logic, and structure of the sessions. A group contract is established, and participants commit to active and consistent participation.

Session 2: Love and Intimacy in Marriage

The focus is on understanding the dynamics of love and intimacy, identifying factors that affect marital relationships over time, and recognizing strengths and areas for growth.

Session 3: Expressing and Active Listening Skills

Techniques for constructive expression and active listening are taught. Participants discuss conflict as a natural part of marriage and learn effective conflict resolution strategies through role-playing and feedback.

Session 4: Problem-Solving Skills

Participants explore the influence of self-perception on problem-solving, learn the steps of the problem-solving process, and identify barriers to effective resolution.

Session 5: Enhancing Sexual Relationships

The importance of sexual relationships in marriage is discussed, including factors that hinder healthy intimacy. Participants reflect on their experiences and learn strategies to improve sexual communication.

Session 6: Financial Management and Values

Family financial planning is addressed through group discussions and exercises. Participants explore the intersection of financial goals and personal values, emphasizing religious and cultural beliefs.

Session 7: Family Dynamics and Parenting Roles

The session focuses on achieving balance between individuality and togetherness within the family. Strategies for effective parenting and managing family crises are discussed.

Session 8: Conclusion and Reflection

The final session reviews key lessons, participants' experiences, and their emotional responses to the program. The group reflects on the progress made and sets goals for maintaining marital satisfaction.

2.4. *Data Analysis*

The data analysis for this study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the marital satisfaction and marital conflict scores across pretest, posttest, and follow-up stages for all groups. Assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variances, and covariance matrices were tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Levene's test, and Box's M test, respectively, to ensure the validity of parametric analyses. Repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the main effects of time, the interaction effects of time $\times$ group, and the differences across the groups for marital satisfaction and marital conflict. When the assumption of sphericity was

violated, adjustments using the Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt corrections were applied. Post hoc comparisons were performed using the Bonferroni test to identify significant differences between groups and stages. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS-27, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

3. Findings and Results

This study aimed to compare the effectiveness of Olson-style marital enrichment training, Lazarus's multimodal therapy, and Islamic approach-based marital skills training on marital satisfaction and marital conflict across three stages: pretest, posttest, and follow-up. The findings are presented in a structured format, including descriptive statistics (Table 1), assumptions testing, ANOVA results (Table 2), and post hoc analyses (Table 3).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Marital Satisfaction and Marital Conflict (M ± SD)

Group	Stage	Marital Satisfaction (M ± SD)	Marital Conflict (M ± SD)
Olson	Pretest	118.35 ± 1.56	87.42 ± 1.12
	Posttest	145.88 ± 1.61	63.36 ± 1.08
	Follow-up	136.11 ± 1.45	69.50 ± 1.10
Lazarus	Pretest	116.74 ± 1.60	85.97 ± 1.15
	Posttest	134.17 ± 1.52	67.58 ± 1.14
	Follow-up	127.85 ± 1.59	71.33 ± 1.20
Islamic	Pretest	117.22 ± 1.53	86.81 ± 1.10
	Posttest	136.19 ± 1.60	65.04 ± 1.12
	Follow-up	128.92 ± 1.49	70.87 ± 1.18
Control	Pretest	115.89 ± 1.62	87.31 ± 1.17
	Posttest	118.30 ± 1.60	85.75 ± 1.15
	Follow-up	119.22 ± 1.63	84.89 ± 1.20

Normality of the dependent variables (marital satisfaction and marital conflict) was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Results indicated that the p-values for both variables were greater than 0.05, confirming that the data are normally distributed. Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene's test, and the results showed no significant

differences in variances across groups ($p > 0.05$), meeting the assumption for ANOVA. Additionally, Box's M test indicated no significant violation of the homogeneity of covariance matrices assumption ($p > 0.001$). These results support the validity of the ANCOVA and ANOVA analyses conducted.

Table 2

Summary of ANOVA for Marital Satisfaction and Marital Conflict

Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Marital Satisfaction	Time	31158.36	2	15579.18	764.85	<0.001	0.91
	Time × Group	14926.21	6	2487.70	122.13	<0.001	0.83
Marital Conflict	Time	25374.66	2	12687.33	1865.36	<0.001	0.96
	Time × Group	8938.84	6	1489.81	219.04	<0.001	0.90

The ANOVA results in Table 2 reveal significant main effects for time and interaction effects of time × group on both marital satisfaction and marital conflict ($p < 0.001$),

indicating that the interventions led to significant changes across stages.

Table 3

Post Hoc Comparisons for Marital Satisfaction and Marital Conflict

Variable	Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Marital Satisfaction	Olson vs. Lazarus	16.08	4.21	0.002	4.69	27.48
	Olson vs. Islamic	14.68	4.21	0.005	3.29	26.08
	Olson vs. Control	30.45	4.21	<0.001	19.06	41.84
	Lazarus vs. Islamic	-1.40	4.21	1.000	-12.79	9.99
	Lazarus vs. Control	14.37	4.21	0.006	2.97	25.76
	Islamic vs. Control	15.77	4.21	0.002	4.37	27.16
Marital Conflict	Olson vs. Lazarus	-6.42	4.12	0.741	-17.58	4.74
	Olson vs. Islamic	-4.38	4.12	1.000	-15.54	6.78
	Olson vs. Control	-22.62	4.12	<0.001	-33.78	-11.46
	Lazarus vs. Islamic	2.03	4.12	1.000	-9.13	13.19
	Lazarus vs. Control	-16.20	4.12	0.001	-27.36	-5.04
	Islamic vs. Control	-18.23	4.12	<0.001	-29.39	-7.07

Post hoc analyses for marital satisfaction revealed that the Olson group scored significantly higher than both the Lazarus and Islamic groups ($p < 0.01$) and significantly outperformed the control group ($p < 0.001$). The Lazarus and Islamic groups showed no significant difference between each other ($p = 1.000$) but were both significantly better than the control group ($p < 0.01$).

Similarly, post hoc comparisons for marital conflict indicated that while all experimental groups achieved significantly lower conflict scores than the control group ($p < 0.01$), there were no significant differences between the Olson, Lazarus, and Islamic groups ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that while all interventions were effective in reducing marital conflict, they were similarly impactful in their outcomes.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted with two general hypotheses. The first hypothesis suggested a difference in the effectiveness of Olson-style marital enrichment training, Lazarus's multimodal therapy, and Islamic approach-based marital skills training on marital satisfaction. To address this hypothesis, the total marital satisfaction scores of the couples were analyzed. According to the results, the significance level obtained from the M-Box test and the F-value was not significant ($p > .001$). In other words, the significance level exceeded .001, validating the assumption. Thus, the results of the covariance analysis were reliable and valid. Additionally, the mean marital satisfaction in all group comparisons (except Groups 2 and 3) showed significant differences, indicating that marital satisfaction in the Olson group was significantly higher than in the other groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that Olson-style training

effectively enhances marital satisfaction. Next, the satisfaction levels of couples in the Islamic and Lazarus groups were analyzed. Both groups demonstrated significantly higher satisfaction means than the control group ($p < .01$). Based on these results, it can be concluded that Islamic teachings and training methods effectively enhance marital satisfaction. These findings align with many previous studies (Armanpanah et al., 2021; Hashemi Babahidari et al., 2020; Jodiri et al., 2017; Lotfi, 2015; Lotfi & Heidari, 2019; Monjezi et al., 2012; Nazari et al., 2019; Pourmohseni et al., 2011; Salari Far, 2021; Sanagooi Zadeh, 2021; Shafii & Jazayeri, 2018).

The results suggest that marital dissatisfaction among couples is a gradual phenomenon. Over time, intimacy and love between spouses wane, and feelings of fatigue and hopelessness negatively affect marital satisfaction. When a spouse experiences marital dissatisfaction, they cannot escape the emotional and psychological burden but still desire to address the issue. Conversely, couples who neglect their issues due to a lack of awareness may find their dissatisfaction evolving into more severe problems over time, making resolution increasingly difficult. These couples often lose the motivation to address marital problems, feeling their relationship has deteriorated. This lack of effort may lead to depression, disengagement, or external relationships, further undermining the marital bond.

Negative feelings and despair emerge due to the stagnation and routine nature of marital life, reducing emotional connection. These couples maintain their relationship solely based on external marital boundaries, leading to a monotonous and habitual existence (Jodiri et al., 2017; Lotfi, 2015). Gratitude is one of the critical communication skills that can prevent marital

dissatisfaction. In marital systems, the more gratitude expressed, the greater the reward for the family system, benefiting both partners (Lotfi & Heidari, 2019).

Another critical skill is self-actualization. Environments that provide opportunities for couples to achieve self-actualization and personal growth reduce the likelihood of dissatisfaction. Such environments ignite romantic affection by encouraging spiritual and personal growth (Butler et al., 2002). Stress is another factor linked to marital dissatisfaction. Over recent decades, studies have reported increasing psychological, physical, and emotional pressures in individuals' lives, collectively referred to as stress, which ultimately manifests as marital dissatisfaction.

Marital dissatisfaction is a gradual process that develops in response to prolonged stress and emotional, physical, or psychological strain. When one spouse, consciously or unconsciously, creates turmoil in the marital relationship, this turmoil gradually leads to dissatisfaction. Early marital enrichment programs are highly effective in fostering healthy family relationships. Without proper education, emotional, intellectual, and motivational development, which are essential for dynamic family adaptation, cannot occur, leading to dysfunction.

A foundational belief in marital enrichment is that misunderstanding or lack of understanding oneself and others diminishes performance, while better understanding oneself and close relations enhances functioning. The primary goal of the enrichment approach is to increase this understanding—not merely for its own sake but to heal past damages, function effectively in the present, and face future challenges (Hashemi Babahidari et al., 2020; Jomehpour & Mahmoudipour, 2018).

Overall, marital dissatisfaction and conflict are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Separating these issues is challenging as disagreements often lead to dissatisfaction, and vice versa. Over time, spouses may withdraw emotionally, leading to feelings of loneliness. Dissatisfied spouses may feel unappreciated and unloved, diminishing intimacy and passion. Instead of resolving their problems, they may take shortcuts, remain silent, or escalate demands that are often unrealistic and unfair. Such dynamics create a toxic environment, leading to anger and frustration. Without specialized intervention, couples may fail to achieve the tranquility necessary for a healthy marital relationship.

In conclusion, Olson-style marital enrichment training, emphasizing marital satisfaction and conflict resolution, provides an effective solution for improving marital relationships.

To address the hypothesis that Olson-style marital enrichment training, Lazarus's multimodal therapy, and Islamic approach-based marital skills training differ in their effectiveness on marital conflict among couples, the total marital conflict scores were analyzed. The results showed that all three interventions were effective in reducing marital conflict, with an effect size of 0.90. This indicates that 90% of the observed changes in marital conflict among the experimental groups can be attributed to the interventions. Marital conflict scores in the experimental groups significantly decreased from pretest to posttest, and this reduction remained relatively stable in follow-up assessments.

Post hoc analysis revealed significant differences in marital conflict in only three group comparisons. Marital conflict in the Olson group did not significantly differ from that in the Lazarus and Islamic groups, nor was there a significant difference between the Lazarus and Islamic groups. However, all three experimental groups showed significant improvements compared to the control group ($p < .01$). These findings suggest that while all three interventions effectively reduced marital conflict, there were no statistically significant differences in effectiveness among them. Regarding Lazarus's multimodal therapy, it can be concluded that this approach enhances marital satisfaction, agreement, emotional intimacy, and adaptability among couples. The findings suggest that this approach is an effective method for reducing marital conflicts. Considering the complexity and diverse influences on marital conflict, employing various therapeutic methods is recommended to improve marital compatibility. The Lazarus approach emphasizes addressing the thoughts, cognitive processes, and behaviors of couples, which directly impacts their marital compatibility. In this study, the intervention included cognitive-behavioral techniques aimed at identifying dysfunctional thoughts, distorted cognitions, and cognitive errors, replacing them with constructive and effective cognitions. Couples were guided to align their behaviors with marital compatibility and conflict resolution strategies.

The core assumption of the Lazarus approach applied in this study is that negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness are not caused by events themselves but by individuals' expectations and interpretations of those events. Anxious individuals tend to overestimate the danger associated with specific situations. This therapy helps couples recognize that their self-defeating thinking patterns often underlie their maladaptive behaviors and conflicts.

These patterns are based on incorrect and irrational assumptions, often accompanied by rigid "should" statements such as "I should always behave kindly toward others." Such rigid beliefs can lead to emotional arousal, and if sustained over time, result in psychological and physical exhaustion. Thus, the therapy focused on challenging these fundamental mistaken beliefs and replacing them with constructive ones. Participants were taught to recognize how unrealistic self-talk could create or exacerbate emotional problems. This approach has proven to be one of the most effective models for changing individuals' behaviors and perceptions of events.

Religious beliefs, on the other hand, act as a mediator in shaping thought processes and daily evaluations. Religious individuals often experience higher emotional regulation and tranquility. Belief in God and engaging in religious practices help reduce negative behaviors stemming from anger and resentment in couples. Emotional regulation contributes significantly to reducing marital conflicts. Religious teachings encourage tranquility, virtuous behavior, and the avoidance of anger and hatred (Quran: Ibrahim 45, Tawbah 103, Fath 4).

The Islamic approach-based training program incorporates skills such as trust in God and resilience in difficult circumstances, enabling individuals to modify self-blame, blame toward others, rumination, and catastrophizing when facing challenges. By accepting circumstances and relying on God, participants were able to foster positive emotions. This method also helped individuals gain deeper self-awareness, identify negative beliefs, recognize personal limitations and resources, manage emotions, instill positive beliefs, better accept realities, and adapt to them constructively.

In conclusion, both the Lazarus and Islamic approaches effectively reduced marital conflicts and enhanced marital satisfaction by equipping couples with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral tools for resolving conflicts and fostering deeper marital compatibility.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

This study faced several limitations that may affect the generalizability of its findings. The sample was limited to couples attending psychological clinics in Isfahan, which may not represent the broader population with diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, the quasi-experimental design and reliance on self-reported measures may introduce biases such as social desirability or

inaccurate self-assessment. The study's short follow-up period may also limit the ability to evaluate the long-term effects of the interventions on marital satisfaction and conflict reduction.

Future studies should consider expanding the sample to include couples from different regions, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds to improve the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal research with extended follow-up periods could provide insights into the sustained impact of these interventions over time. Furthermore, exploring the effectiveness of these approaches in addressing specific marital issues such as financial conflicts, parenting stress, or infidelity would enhance understanding of their broader applicability. Comparative studies involving other therapeutic frameworks could also enrich the literature.

Practitioners in marital counseling and therapy can use these findings to incorporate tailored elements of Olson's marital enrichment training, Lazarus's multimodal therapy, and Islamic-based approaches into their practices. Training programs for counselors could emphasize integrating these methods to address diverse client needs effectively. Policymakers and educational institutions could also implement marital education workshops using these approaches to enhance relationship skills, particularly in premarital counseling settings, to promote healthier and more stable marital relationships.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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