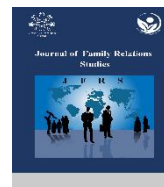




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Research Paper

Developing a Marital Skills Training Package and its Effectiveness on Enhancing Intimacy and Psychological Well-being of Couples with Marital Conflicts: A Mixed-Methods Research



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research aimed to develop a training package on marital skills and its effectiveness in improving intimacy and psychological well-being of couples involved in marital conflicts.

Methods: The research method in the qualitative part was content analysis, and in the quantitative part, a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group. The statistical population in the qualitative section was 10 specialists in the field of counseling and psychology, and in the quantitative section, couples with conflict in the city of Shahrekord in 1403. The research method, purposive sampling method was used. In this research, 16 couples with the inclusion and exclusion criteria were selected and randomly assigned to the experimental group (8 couples) and the control group (8 couples). To collect data, the Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ), Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (RPWBS), and the Marital Intimacy Scale (MIS) were used. The data were analyzed using analysis of covariance and SPSS24 software. The results of the analysis of covariance showed ($P < 0.01$).

Results: Therefore, it can be concluded that marital skills training, as a social approach, had an enhancing role in intimacy and psychological well-being of couples with marital conflicts.

Conclusion: The results of this research can be used by counseling and psychological centers, education and training, parent-teacher associations, welfare organizations, and all cultural institutions.

1. Introduction

Marital conflicts are considered one of the common problems of couples in today's world (Ho, 2025). Gordon (2003) considers marital disagreements and divorce after sudden death as the most important factors affecting the creation of tension in the family. Conflict is a type of marital relationship that includes violent

behaviors such as insult, blame, criticism, and physical assault, in which the husband and wife feel hostility, resentment, anger, and hatred towards each other, and each believes that their spouse is an undesirable and incompatible person who causes them pain and suffering. Based on data from the Statistical Center of

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Iran (2024), the divorce rate in the country increased by approximately 13 percent in 2021, about 15 percent in 2023, and more than 17 percent in 2024. This upward trend has also been highlighted in scientific studies, indicating the impact of economic and social factors on the family crisis in Iranian society (Ahmadi et al., 2025). In recent years, many studies have shown that life skills training, by improving individuals' psychosocial abilities such as anger management skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and group training, is effective in controlling individuals in the face of problems (Soleimani et al., 2021; Asadpour et al., 2025; Mikaeili et al., 2025). It seems that if couples learn life skills well, they may choose more appropriate solutions to deal with problems. Training in these skills can be effective in the longevity of marital life, increasing intimacy and hope (Muslimi and Khan Mohammadi Ataqsa 2023). Life skills are a set of abilities that help individuals effectively cope with difficult situations and ensure their mental health (Segrin and Taylor, 2007). Life skills training leads to motivation and healthy behavior. Also, others' perception of them is effective and leads to a sense of competence, effectiveness, overcoming problems or adapting to failure, the ability to plan and behave purposefully, or changing goals encountered with failure and appropriate to the problem hope (Muslimi and Khan Mohammadi Ataqsa 2023). In today's fast-paced world, equipping oneself with life skills is essential to respond to challenges, as environmental changes affect family life. Therefore, to prevent marital disputes, enhance intimacy, well-being, and satisfaction, life skills training has become one of the necessities of the present era (Mortezaazadeh et al., 2024). People consider marriage the most intimate relationship in adulthood, a relationship that is their main source of affection, support, and satisfaction (Mazarei et al., 2023). Clearly, the ability to create an intimate relationship is a personal factor whose importance is often highlighted due to its crucial role in the development of close relationships and its connection to marital well-being (Mahoney et al., 2021). Therefore, an intimate relationship reduces individual conflicts and creates mental health, which is the main factor in providing health, harmony, happiness, and a sense of meaning in couples and increasing communication compatibility (Rezazadeh et al., 2024; Mohammadivand et al., 2023; Mohammadivand et al., 2021; Mazarei et al., 2023). Many studies show that failure in communication and intimacy is one of the most common problems that dissatisfied couples express (Mahoney et al., 2021). Therefore, the ability to establish and maintain intimate relationships with others helps individuals overcome communication problems and have satisfying marital relationships. In this regard, creating an intimate relationship between spouses is the first step in

creating a desirable marriage. Therefore, creating and maintaining intimate relationships in marriage is a skill and art that, in addition to the psychological well-being of couples and healthy early experiences, requires acquiring skills and performing a specific task (Kusner et al., 2021). In recent years, the component of psychological well-being has been considered one of the main topics in the field of positive psychology. Numerous studies have shown that this component is directly related to reducing stress levels in couples, reducing marital conflicts, and improving marital satisfaction (Tamannaifar et al., 2025; Mousavi et al., 2019). In addition, research results indicate that high marital satisfaction is always contingent upon an adequate level of psychological well-being (Yahyapour et al., 2021). In general, the lack of psychological well-being in marital life can lead to problems such as anxiety, fear, anger, depression, and dissatisfaction, while its active presence can strengthen positive emotions, healthy relationships, meaning-making, environmental control, and positive interaction (Jena et al., 2018).

In recent years' research, the component of psychological well-being has been one of the main topics in positive psychology. Various definitions have been presented for this concept, one of the most important of which is Ryff's model (1989). According to this model, psychological well-being includes the dimensions of personal growth, positive relationships with others, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and environmental mastery. Psychological well-being encompasses both cognitive and emotional dimensions; the cognitive dimension includes life satisfaction, while the emotional dimension refers to having numerous positive emotions and a reduction in negative emotions (Delghandi Sani and Namani, 2024).

In order to improve mental health and marital relationships, life skills training programs have a special place. Based on the viewpoint of behavioral science experts, life skills training is one of the most effective ways to help individuals have a better and healthier life (Muslimi & Khan Mohammadi Ataqsa, 2023). Given the role of intimacy in strengthening the positive emotions and thoughts of couples and reducing negative thoughts, and also the direct impact of psychological well-being on experiencing positive emotions and establishing appropriate and meaningful relationships, life skills training can be effective in improving the satisfaction and mental health of couples (Javini & Ilkhani, 2021; Jena et al., 2018). Numerous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of life skills training in improving marital relationships and reducing conflicts (Naeim and Sharif, 2016). For example, Pihet et al. (2007) showed that educational interventions in the field of life skills can improve the mental health and intimacy of couples, and its positive effects continue for up to one year after the

program implementation. Also, Schaefer and Olson. (1981) showed that one way to increase intimacy between husband and wife is to educate them. In educating couples, the existing elements in an improved relationship are improved and changes are made in it. The goal of this change and growth is to transform the lack of intimacy into intimacy (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). They emphasized the importance of life skills training in increasing the level of intimacy among couples and pointed out the role of this training in changing the elements of the relationship and transforming an unhealthy relationship into a healthy and intimate one. Finally, the findings of the study by Muslimi & Khan Mohammadi Ataqsa, (2023). showed that life skills training has a positive effect on marital adjustment and mental health in couples seeking divorce and can lead to positive feelings in the lives of couples. Also, the study by Kamankesh et al. (2024) also confirmed the effectiveness of life skills training in reducing conflicts, improving conflict resolution styles, and promoting psychological well-being in incompatible couples. In addition, Hahlweg et al. (2015), in a study on couples before marriage in Germany, showed that life skills training can improve marital satisfaction, agreement, problem-solving skills, and positive relationship behaviors. Finally, the study by Mohammadivand et al., (2021) also confirmed the positive effect of life skills training on marital satisfaction in married women.

The increase in divorce rates in Iran, which ranks fourth in the world (Mohammadivand et al., 2023), indicates a serious crisis in the structure of marital relationships. This situation, along with increasing cultural and social changes, highlights the need to develop preventive programs and effective interventions in the field of couples' empowerment. Despite a significant number of marital skills training packages in domestic studies (Bahrami Hidaji, et al., 2023; Sarfarazi, et al., 2022; Lachini, et al., 2023), most of these programs are general and have not specifically addressed categories such as "empathy," "honesty," "life satisfaction," and "respect." Also, these packages have focused more on general couples or dissatisfied women and have paid less attention to couples with severe conflicts. In contrast, the present educational package, based on the findings of the qualitative phase and content analysis, provides more comprehensive and practical categories that can meet the psychological and social needs of conflicting couples. This package, with a cultural approach and based on Iranian conditions, can be proposed as a practical and effective solution in promoting intimacy and psychological well-being of couples. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of the marital skills educational package on

promoting intimacy and psychological well-being of couples with marital conflicts.

2. Materials and Methods

The method of the present study in the qualitative part (compilation of life skills training package) was content analysis by deductive method and in the quantitative part of the present study, it was a semi-experimental design with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group. The statistical population of the study was conflicting couples in Shahr-e Kord city in 2024. Purposeful sampling method was used to select the sample size. Thus, 32 clients whose marital conflict scores were higher than the cutoff point (115) were selected and the reason for this selection was that in the marital conflict questionnaire, those whose raw score was in the range of 115 to 124 have excessive conflict and a raw score of 235 and above are considered to have severe conflict or highly vulnerable relationships. These individuals were selected from among the clients of the Shahr-e Kord Jahesh Counseling and Psychology Center affiliated with the National Welfare Organization and based on the score of the Iranian Clinical Marital Conflict Questionnaire, which was designed between a minimum range of 42 and a maximum of 210, and were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups (16 people in the experimental group and 16 people in the control group). Then, the experimental groups received the marital skills package for 10 weeks, one 80-minute session per week. This is while the control group did not receive any intervention during the study and was waiting to receive the interventions. After completing the sessions, a post-test was administered. The criteria for entering the study were being voluntary and obtaining a score of more than 115 on the marital conflict questionnaire and not receiving psychological intervention at the same time. Exclusion criteria included missing more than two sessions, not cooperating or completing the specified tasks, and not wanting to continue participating in the research process. In order to comply with research ethics, consent was obtained from the couples to participate in the intervention program and they were informed about all stages of the intervention. Couples in the control group were also assured that they would also receive these interventions after completing the research process, if they wished.

Instruments

Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ): Sanaei Zaker et al. (2009) Sanai questionnaire was used to measure marital conflicts. This questionnaire has 42 questions and is used to measure marital conflicts. This questionnaire measures seven dimensions of marital conflicts, which are: decreased cooperation, decreased sexual relations,

increased emotional reactions, increased seeking of child support, increased personal relationships with one's relatives, decreased family relationships with spouse's relatives and friends, and separating financial matters from each other. Responses to questions are based on a Likert scale with the spectrum of never, rarely, sometimes, and always, and are scored from 1 to 5. In this study, a higher score means more conflict. Those whose raw score is in the range of 70 to 114 (equivalent to a standard score of 40 to 60) have normal marital relationships, and those whose raw score is in the range of 115 to 124 (equivalent to a standard score of 60 to 70) have more than normal conflict, and those whose raw score is 235 and above (equivalent to a standard score of more than 70) have severe conflict or extremely vulnerable relationships. The maximum score on the questionnaire is 210 and the minimum is 42. The reliability coefficient for the entire questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha is 80% for the entire questionnaire and 92% through retesting and for its 7 subscales is as follows: 73%, 60%, 74%, 81%, 65%, 81%, and 69%, which indicates its appropriate reliability in Iranian society. Also, the reliability coefficient in the study of [Khazaei et al. \(2023\)](#) was 97% for the entire questionnaire and 94%, 91%, 95%, 87%, 94%, 63%, and 68% for its subscales, respectively, which indicates that this questionnaire has good content validity. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was 87%.

Ryff Psychological Well-being Scale (RPWBS): This scale is derived from the original 120-item form. This version consists of 6 factors, which are independence, mastery of the environment, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The subject must specify on a 6-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) to what extent they agree or disagree with each statement. The correlation of this test with the 84-item scale was reported from 0.70 to 0.89. In Iran, in a study, the internal consistency of it using Cronbach's alpha for the subscales of self-acceptance, environmental control, positive relationship with others, having a purpose in life, personal growth, and independence, and overall reliability were 0.51, 0.76, 0.75, 0.53, 0.73, 0.72, and 0.71, respectively ([Rahimi et al., 2019](#)). In the present study, the reliability was 0.89 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Marital Intimacy Scale (MIS): This scale was developed by [Walker and Thompson \(1983\)](#) to measure love and intimacy and consists of 17 items. This scale is part of a larger instrument that encompasses several dimensions of intimacy. The questionnaire is scored based on a Likert scale ranging from never to always (score 1 to 7). The range of scores is between 17 and 119,

with higher scores indicating greater intimacy. [Walker and Thompson \(1983\)](#) reported the scale's reliability through Cronbach's alpha as 91% to 97%, and obtained the content validity of the present questionnaire as satisfactory and 86%. [Etemadi et al. \(2006\)](#), reported the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale as 96%. Also, the construct validity of the questionnaire was 82%. In this research, the reliability of the scale was calculated as 88% using Cronbach's alpha.

Research Design and Implementation

After obtaining the necessary permits related to the ethical code IR.IAU.SDJ.REC.1403.157, the sampling process was carried out (as mentioned above), the selected conflicting couples (32 people) were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups (16 conflicting couples in the experimental group and 16 in the control group). Conflicting couples in the experimental groups received a marital skills intervention package with a counseling specialist and instructions for implementing the interventions. In order to prevent confounding variables and increase the validity of the research, they received one 80-minute session per week for 10 weeks. This is while the couples in the control group did not receive any intervention. The marital skills training package was also compiled using the content analysis method in a deductive manner as follows:

Quality Section of Package Development

In the first stage, the psychological, emotional, and affective needs of conflicting couples with behavioral problems, the psychological and social characteristics of this group of couples, and the theoretical foundations for reducing their behavioral problems were studied and collected exclusively. In this way, in the first stage, the researcher studied and carefully reviewed the research background based on relevant published articles and books. In the second stage, the materials collected in the first stage were categorized (coded) based on [Braun, & Clarke's \(2006\)](#) inductive thematic analysis approach, and conceptual-content subgroups related to marital skills were formed. In the third stage, the conceptual-content subgroups formed in the final stage of the marital skills package were extracted with 87 open codes, 32 core codes, and 7 main categories (comprehensive themes) including: "Respect and Appreciation", "Cooperation and Division of Labor", "Emotion Management", "Self-Regulation", "Empathy, Intimacy, and Love", "Honesty and Integrity", and "Life Satisfaction".

Content validity index and ratio study

In order to study the content validity of the marital skills package and review past research in the field of related published articles and books ([Pashaei et al., 2021](#); [Ahmadi, & Rahimi Mehran 2022](#); [Reesi et al., 2023](#)), based on the inductive content analysis approach of

Braun, & Clarke (2006), it was classified (coded) and conceptual content subgroups focused on marital skills were formed. Then, it was presented to 10 members of the university faculty in the fields of counseling and psychology and they were asked to help compile the final package by studying and commenting on the structure, process, and content of each session in the form of a survey questionnaire that was compiled with the educational package and provided to each of the specialists. In addition, at this stage, it was necessary to provide an open-response comment form to each expert to provide suggestions and corrective comments to improve the content, structure, and process of the marital skills package for couples with marital conflicts, which was done. In the next stage, the expert opinions of 10 experts were reviewed and their corrective comments about the marital skills package for couples with marital

conflicts were made, and the marital skills package was finalized and prepared. Subsequently, the designed program as a 10-session training program, was provided to 10 experts in order to determine CVR and CVI (Lawshe, 1975) and the necessary opinion was sought. The values of the content validity coefficient and the results of acceptance or rejection of the sessions and the content of the training package for each training session are reported separately in the table below. Finally, after implementing the suggestions and making the necessary modifications, the total CVI and CVR values of the designed program were 0.80 and 0.83, respectively.

C) Training sessions

At this stage, considering the compilation of the training package and CVI and CVR based on the opinions of experts, the marital skills program was presented in Table (1).

Table 1. Marital skills training package

| Session | Title | Objective | Meeting Minutes |
|---------|--|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction | Introduction of members, stating the rules of the meetings, stating the objectives. | Introduction of the instructor, presentation of group rules, session objectives, session times and how they will be held, introduction of the couples and commitment to the rules. |
| 2 | Respect and appreciation | Couples' Familiarity with the Role of Respect in Interpersonal Relationships | Explaining the importance of respecting one's spouse to couples and presenting real-life situations, such as active listening, appreciating the spouse's efforts, and so on. |
| 3 | Cooperation and division of labor | Improving spousal relationships Helping each other | Couples' education on the concept of cooperation and collaboration, strengths and weaknesses of beliefs, values, and.. |
| 4 | Emotion Management | Emotion Recognition How emotions are expressed and. | Training on the role of emotions in establishing communication with others and influencing them, as well as organizing and stimulating human behavior among members. |
| 5 | Emotion regulation | Identifying one's own regulatory strategies | a) In the emotional assessment form, introduce the methods that have been effective in reducing the intensity and duration of their emotional responses and rate the effectiveness of these methods. |
| 6 | Empathy | Couples' education on communicating with each other, expressing needs, ways of empathy, and showing attention to sexual and non-sexual relationships. | Discussion regarding the role of empathy in challenging situations in the marital happiness process and its benefits, the role of understanding and accompanying the spouse in establishing a relationship and paying attention to the spouse's physical, emotional, and psychological needs. |
| 7 | Intimacy and Love | Maintaining and creating intimacy, strengthening friendly relationships between couples, ways of expressing love and positive feelings to a spouse | Descriptions regarding how to establish an active and effective communication, sharing feelings, creating shared memories, respect and attention, supporting each other, increasing tolerance and patience, feeling secure, support and companionship, not violating personal privacy, and taking care of healthy physical relationships. |
| 8 | Honesty, truthfulness, and integrity | Couples' acquaintance with methods of creating and strengthening the virtues of honesty and integrity | Couples' education regarding the concept of honesty and integrity |
| 9 | Life satisfaction and summary of the content | Self-satisfaction, spouse satisfaction, children's satisfaction, work-life balance, self-confidence, and a sense of autonomy. | Discussion regarding shared goals and aspirations, the ability to cooperate and work together towards marital happiness, supporting each other in facing life's problems and challenges, accepting differences, satisfaction with married life, and post-test implementation. |
| 10 | Summarization and Conclusion | Summary of the materials and troubleshooting | Overview of previous sessions and answering couples' questions |

Data Analysis Method

In this study, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the obtained data. In descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used, and in inferential statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to test the normality of the dependent variable distribution with the assumptions (continuous data, independent, appropriate volume), to examine the homogeneity of data variance, the Levine test was used to examine the assumption of homogeneity of data variance error and with the assumptions (continuous data, independent observations), and the Bonferroni post hoc test was used to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test stages with the assumptions (normality, homogeneity of variance, and independence of observations). SPSS-24 statistical software was used to analyze the obtained data.

3. Results

A: In the qualitative part of the research, semi-structured

interviews were conducted with 10 experts in the field of family counseling and psychology using criterion-based purposive sampling in the form of qualitative research using the theoretical saturation method.

B: In the quantitative part of the research, the participants included 32 conflicting couples, whose age distribution in the marital skills training group was as follows: 20 to 25 years old (6.25%), 26 to 30 years old (25%), 31 to 35 years old (43.75%), and 36 years and older (25%). Also, in the control group, they are in the age group of 20 to 25 years (12.25%), in the age group of 26 to 30 years (25%), in the age group of 31 to 35 years (43.75%), and in the age group of more than 36 years (18.75%). Also, the longest duration of marriage is in the group of 4 to 6 years.

Descriptive Indicators

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation of marital intimacy and control variables.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics related to the marital intimacy variable according to group

| Dependent variable | Group | Number | Pre-test | | post-test | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------|----------|------|-----------|------|
| | | | M | SD | M | SD |
| Marital intimacy | Marriage Skills Training | 16 | 13 | 4.38 | 22.18 | 5.63 |
| | Group Control | 16 | 14.68 | 3.09 | 15 | 3.09 |

Based on the results of Table 2, the average scores of marital intimacy in the two experimental groups increased

from pre-test (13) to post-test (18 / 22).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics related to the psychological well-being variable by group

| Dependent variable | Component | Group | Number | Pre-test | | post-test | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|----------|------|-----------|------|
| | | | | M | SD | M | SD |
| Psychological well-being | Independence | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 3.93 | 1.43 | 4.62 | 2.06 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 4.18 | 1.79 | 4.68 | 1.92 |
| Psychological well-being | Mastery of the environment | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 4.43 | 1.63 | 8.81 | 2.04 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 4.06 | 2.11 | 5.93 | 1.28 |
| Psychological well-being | Personal growth | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 3.56 | 1.50 | 8 | 2.60 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 4.12 | 2.15 | 4.87 | 1.62 |
| Psychological well-being | Positive interaction with others | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 3.37 | 1.31 | 8.56 | 1.89 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 4.81 | 1.83 | 4.43 | 1.31 |
| Psychological well-being | Purposefulness in life | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 6.81 | 2.16 | 11.37 | 2.44 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 8.25 | 2.25 | 9.06 | 2.47 |
| | Self-acceptance | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 7.18 | 1.93 | 11.43 | 1.82 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 7.31 | 1.97 | 7.12 | 2.02 |
| | Total Score Psychological well-being | Marriage Skills Training Package | 16 | 29.31 | 4.31 | 52.81 | 5.23 |
| | | Group Control | 16 | 30.75 | 4.43 | 32.12 | 5.31 |

Based on the results of Table 3, in the experimental group, the mean scores of psychological well-being in the pre-test (29.31) and post-test increased (52.81). Examining the Assumptions of Parametric Tests A: Examining Normality: The Shapiro-Wilk test was used

to examine the normality of the distribution of the dependent variable with the assumptions (continuous, independent data, appropriate volume) of the marital intimacy variable ($w=0.243$, $P=0.187$) and the psychological well-being variable ($w=0.931$, $P=0.119$).

The results of the variables indicate that the distribution of scores in the research variables is natural and normal. B: Levine's test: This test was used to examine the assumption of homogeneity of variance error of the data and in compliance with the assumptions (continuous data, independent observations). The results showed that the marital intimacy variable ($F=2.31$, $P=0.111$) and the psychological well-being variable ($F=1.16$, $P=0.352$)

have homogeneity of variance. C: The M-box test confirmed the assumption of equality of variance and covariance matrices with ($F = 3.06$, $P = .626$). E: Bonferroni post hoc test to compare mean scores with assumptions of (normality, homogeneity of variance, and independence of observations). D: Homogeneity of the slope of the regression line ($P \geq .05$) was also confirmed.

Table 4. Between-subject effects of multivariate analysis of covariance in the post-test of intimacy and psychological well-being variables

| Dependent variables | S.S | DF | F | P | LF | S.P |
|--------------------------|----------|----|---------|-------|-------|-----|
| Intimacy | 538.009 | 1 | 105.01 | 0.001 | 0.759 | 1 |
| Psychological well-being | 1750.814 | 1 | 5191.59 | 0.001 | 0.876 | 1 |

The results of multivariate analysis of covariance in Table 4) show that the marital skills training package (with the pre-test effect controlled as a covariance factor on the post-test) had a significant effect on intimacy and psychological well-being. In this study, before analyzing covariance, the equality of the experimental and control groups in terms of pre-test scores was examined. In order to test this hypothesis, an independent t-test was used to compare the mean pre-test scores of the two groups. The results of this test showed that there was no significant difference between the mean pre-test scores of the

experimental and control groups ($P < 0.05$); therefore, the assumption of equality of the groups at the level of the dependent variable before the intervention was confirmed and a suitable basis was provided for continuing the analysis of covariance. Accordingly, it can be said that a significant difference was created in at least one of the dependent variables. Therefore, the effect coefficient showed that the "marital skills training" intervention program was effective by 0.795 and 0.876 percent on the intimacy of couples and the psychological well-being of couples, respectively.

Table 5. Results of multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA)

| Exam Type | Amount | F | p | Eta ² | S.P |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|------------------|-----|
| Pile effect Wilczek's Lambda | 0.947 | 150.08 | 0.001 | 0.948 | 1 |
| | 0.053 | 150.07 | 0.001 | 0.948 | 1 |

The results of Table 5 indicate that the Pillai effect is significant with ($P=0.001$; $F=150.08$) and Wilks' lambda with ($P=0.001$; $F=150.07$). In other words, training with the marital skills package has significantly affected the increase in marital intimacy and psychological well-being of conflicting couples compared to the control group ($P=0.001$). Also, the effect size ($Eta^2=0.948$) is close to 1, which is a very large number, meaning that the

developed marital happiness package has been able to explain 94.8 percent of the variance of this educational model; in other words, this educational package has been able to create a significant difference in at least one of the variables of marital intimacy and psychological well-being and its subscales in conflicting couples. And since the statistical power is equal to 1, the findings have high reliability.

Table 6. Bonferroni post hoc test comparing marital skills package interventions on intimacy and psychological well-being

| Dependent variable | Training method | Comparison of methods | Mean difference | Standard Error | Significance level |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Intimacy | Marriage Skills Training Package | Group Control | 8.57 | 1.54 | 0.001 |
| Psychological well-being | Marriage Skills Training Package | Group Control | 15.46 | 1.16 | 0.001 |

Based on the results of Table 6, the Bonferroni post hoc test for the pairwise comparison of the experimental group and the control group in the effectiveness of the marital skills training package on marital intimacy and psychological well-being has shown that there was a significant difference in the variables of marital intimacy and psychological well-being of conflicting couples between the post-test and the pre-test. In other words, the marital skills training package has been able to significantly increase the variables of marital intimacy and psychological well-being of conflicting couples by

8.57 and 15.46 points, respectively ($p < 0.01$).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a marital skills training package on promoting intimacy and psychological well-being of couples involved in marital conflicts. The findings showed that life skills training was effective in promoting intimacy and psychological well-being of couples with marital conflict and was able to lead to increased intimacy and psychological well-being of these couples.

The first finding of the present study was the effect of life skills training on marital intimacy. The present package was developed for the first time in the current study; therefore, the study is not completely consistent with it, but the present finding is consistent with the results of the research of [Muslimi & Khan Mohammadi Ataqsara 2023](#); [Mazarei et al., 2023](#); [Javini & Ilkhani, 2021](#); [Jena et al., 2018](#). [Naeim, & Sharif, 2016](#); [Pihet et al. \(2007\)](#), [Schaefer & Olson, \(1981\)](#). In explanation, life skills training, by focusing on improving the quality of communication and increasing self-awareness, plays a pivotal role in improving couples' intimacy ([Mohammadivand et al., 2023](#)). Through training in new effective communication techniques, couples become familiar with key skills such as self-awareness, problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships and can interact with each other more constructively. These trainings help couples manage their emotions properly and prevent destructive behaviors in the face of stress and conflicts ([Muslimi & Khan Mohammadi Ataqsara 2023](#)). As a result, a safe, supportive, and trust-filled atmosphere is created in the relationship. Also, by equipping couples with problem-solving skills, they will be able to face challenges jointly and constructively, prevent the accumulation of tensions, and strengthen the sense of cooperation, empathy, and intimacy in their relationships. Another finding of the study showed that the overall average scores from the psychological well-being questionnaire of couples with marital conflict were lower before training than the average scores after training. According to this finding, it can be concluded that life skills training is effective on the psychological well-being of couples with conflict, and the experimental group of couples with conflict had significantly better scores in psychological well-being compared to the control group. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies, including [Muslimi & Khan Mohammadi Ataqsara 2023](#); [Kamankesh et al. \(2024\)](#); [Hahlweg et al. \(2015\)](#), [Pihet et al. \(2007\)](#). In terms of the reasons for the effect of life skills training on mental health in couples with marital conflict, it can be said that in this program, couples were trained on the skills of emotion regulation and control, empathy, honest conversation, and expressing attention to non-sexual sexual relationships. Life skills training that affects the psychological well-being of couples increases the individual's awareness of various aspects of life. Thus, paying attention to the psychological well-being component such as paying attention to the body, mind, amount of independence, social relationships, environmental situation and values in life, may increase the resistance and empowerment of individuals and increase their adaptation to problems related to married life. This in turn, increases life satisfaction. On the other hand, participating in life, [Kamankesh et al. 2024](#)) skills training and exchanging

views on problems and feeling sympathy with others make them more hopeful about finding a solution to problems ([Muslimi & Khan Mohammadi Ataqsara 2023](#)). Therefore, the sum of these factors increases psychological well-being in couples with conflict.

Since the majority of the content of the life skills training package is dedicated to how to establish effective interpersonal communication and manage conflicts, and since constructive and quality communication are considered acquired elements, improving the knowledge of the audience through active participation in the training workshop can increase the quality of communication between couples. This means that acquiring life skills in establishing effective communication and respecting it throughout life together can, in addition to eliminating destructive communication patterns, make the quality of communication more constructive and play a role in improving the level of intimacy and psychological well-being of couples. Among the limitations of this research was the use of voluntary sampling, and given that the present study was conducted in Shahr-e Kord and on a specific spectrum (couples with marital conflicts), caution should be exercised in generalizing the results. In general, it is suggested that the effectiveness of the educational package used in this study for other groups facing other variables, such as sexual satisfaction, conflict management, and couples' relationship beliefs, should also be evaluated.

5. Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

This study has been approved by the ethics code IR.IAU.SDJ.REC.1403.157. In this study, the researcher obtained the consent of the couples to participate in the intervention program. The participants were also fully informed about the implementation process of the interventions. The researcher assured the couples in the group that these interventions would be provided to them after the completion of the research process. The couples in the two experimental and control groups were also assured that their information would remain confidential and that there was no need to include their names.

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Authors' contributions

All authors have participated in the design, implementation and writing of all sections of the present study.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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