

A comparative Study of Differentiation of Self, Communication Patterns, and Conflict Resolution Tactics between Divorce Seeking and Normal Couples

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Abstract

Aim: The health of a family is influenced by the continuity and well-being of the relationship between the couple, which serves as the central core of the family system. The main objective of this study was to examine the differentiation, communication patterns, and conflict resolution strategies of regular couples and couples who are seeking divorce in Tehran.

Method: This research utilized a descriptive correlational approach using structural equation modeling. The first group consisted of 39,282 individuals seeking divorce in Tehran who had sought assistance from family courts in 2019 and had cohabitated for a minimum of two years. The second group included regular couples in Tehran who had cohabitated for at least two years and had similar demographic characteristics as the first group. The data collection tools used in this study included the Self-Differentiation Questionnaire (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) (Christensen & Salari, 1984), Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire (Rahim, 1983). The data was analyzed using SPSS26 software with a multivariate analysis of variance test.

Results: Based on the findings, there is a notable distinction in all aspects of differentiation between the two groups ($P=0.01$). Moreover, findings revealed significant variance in mutual constructive communication, male expectation/female withdrawal communication, female expectation/male withdrawal communication, and mutual avoidance communication between the two groups ($P=0.01$). The average scores for these components were higher among normal couples compared to divorce applicants, thus confirming the third hypothesis of the study regarding conflict resolution differences ($P=0.01$).

Conclusion: The findings indicated notable differences in various aspects such as differentiation, styles of conflict resolution, and communication patterns when comparing couples who are in the process of seeking a divorce to those who are in stable and healthy relationships. This comparative analysis highlights how couples on the verge of separation navigate these critical relationship dynamics differently than those who have successfully maintained harmony and stability in their partnerships.

Keywords: Couples communication patterns, Differentiation, Conflict resolution.

Introduction

One of the key intrapersonal factors that significantly impact marital satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and subsequent divorce is the level of differentiation within each couple (Mohammadi, & Alibakhshi, 2021). Differentiation is a fundamental concept in Bowen family therapy systems, which helps in understanding how individuals function in their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and contribute to the establishment and maintenance of long-lasting and mutual intimacy in marriage, as well as the satisfaction of couples (Bowen, 2018). The intellectual and emotional independence of couples, linked to individual differentiation, is crucial. Essentially, individuals with a high level of differentiation have a clear sense of self and their values, enabling them to make rational decisions even in emotionally charged situations (Lampis, Cataudella, Agus, Busonera, & Skowron, 2019). On the other hand, undifferentiated individuals, lacking a distinct identity, tend to be swayed by the emotional turmoil within their family during crises and interpersonal conflicts, leading to heightened chronic anxiety and susceptibility to psychological issues and symptoms of illness (Morelli, Hong, Garcia, Elzie, Alvarez, & Villodas, 2023).

Numerous studies have suggested that differentiation can be used to predict the quality of a marital relationship and intimacy between spouses. The Pillage study indicated a positive correlation between high levels of differentiation and marital satisfaction among couples in various stages of life (Khabiri Pooya, Mohammadi, Karami, & Rahimian Boogar, 2022). A Study discovered that individuals with greater levels of differentiation in their marriages tend to have better self-adjustment and, consequently, well-built marital commitment (Tönbül, & Özdemir, 2023). Based on the results of numerous studies, communication problems are the most common problem for couples (Soltani Ramezan Zadeh, et al 2020; Someeh, Gorbanikh, Heedarirad, & Beh Afarin, 2021; Rezaeian, massumy, & hosseiniyan, 2018). Although communication difficulties are not considered as the only cause of marital discord, they are a major cause of distress in couples' relationships and exacerbate the existing problems (Bukhari, & Hai, 2023). Due to the fact that inefficient communication results in unresolved issues and repetitive conflicts in the relationship, which then gradually wreck the couple's compatibility (Gen, Göktaş, & Şendoğan, 2021). To carry out the marital relationship in a healthy manner, many factors such as spouses mutually providing emotional support to each other, respecting and adapting to their personal characteristics, having positive communication skills, and sexual compatibility should be considered. Unresolved conflicts, weak and negative communication patterns emerge when these duties and behaviors are unfulfilled between the couples (Kalkan & Yalçın, 2015).

Conflict resolution methods and tactics play a crucial role in determining the quality of marital relationships. Conflict is a natural part of human interactions and can be categorized into constructive and unconstructive types. Constructive conflict involves compromise and appropriate, positive solutions, while unconstructive conflict entails threats and authoritarian, inappropriate solutions. Conflict resolution tactics represent the actions individuals take when faced with conflict to resolve the situation (Wagner, Mosmann, Scheeren, & Levandowski, 2019). These tactics include avoidance, kindness, conciliation, dominance, and cooperation. Avoidance behavior is characterized by

isolation, blaming others, and withdrawal (Krueger, Diabes, & Weingart, 2022). Cooperative tactics involve efforts to reduce differences and emphasize similarities to address the expectations and issues of others. Conciliatory behavior aims to balance one's needs with those of others, focusing on the equal distribution of benefits. Domineering tactics often involve threats (Onyinyechi, & Wichendu, 2021). In cooperative conflict resolution, information is shared, and differences are discussed to find a mutually acceptable solution. This approach is problem-solving oriented and can lead to innovative problem-solving strategies (Taghavi Dinani, bagheri, Khalatbari, 2020). The researcher, well-versed in psychology topics like marriage, divorce, differentiation, and conflict, with a keen interest in studying the impact of these factors on divorce, aims to explore differentiation and conflict resolution styles in both normal and divorcing couples in Tehran to determine if there are differences in communication patterns and conflict resolution styles between the two groups (Rashidi, Monirpour, Dokanei Fard, 2022).

The rising divorce rates and marital dissatisfaction, coupled with changing expectations and roles among spouses, highlight the need for specialized interventions and training in couples' relationships.

The study focuses on the importance of differentiation, communication patterns, and sexual satisfaction in marital satisfaction and aims to explore strategies to improve communication quality in couples to develop effective therapeutic and educational methods to reduce divorces. By examining these variables and their impact on divorce rates, the study seeks to provide insights for decision-makers to address this social issue, improve premarital counseling, and prevent divorces, promoting family stability. While past research in Iran has explored differentiation, communication patterns, and conflict resolution styles separately, this study is the first to investigate the relationship between these factors and divorce, aiming to uncover new connections to combat the issue. The primary objective of the research is to examine the distinctions, methods of communication, and strategies for resolving conflicts among couples in Tehran, both those who are married and those who are going through a divorce.

Method

The research utilized a causal-comparative method, comparing two groups of couples - one group consisted of divorce applicants, and the other included ordinary couples - at three different levels. Two statistical populations were examined in this study. The first population included 39,282 individuals seeking divorce in Tehran in 2019 who had been married for two years. The second population consisted of ordinary couples in Tehran who had been married for at least two years and were similar to the first population's demographic characteristics. From the first population, 30 couples (60 individuals) seeking divorce were randomly chosen from Family Judicial Complex 1, Family Judicial Complex 2, and Shahid Mofateh Judicial Complex. After analyzing the demographic characteristics of this group, 15 couples (30 individuals) who closely matched the demographic characteristics of the first population were selected from recreational centers, commercial complexes, and parks in a non-random, accessible manner for the ordinary group. The sample size was determined based on the type of research being

conducted, with 30 individuals (15 from each group) deemed appropriate for this study (Delavar et al, 2010). To enhance external validity, a total sample size of 60 individuals was considered for this research. The sampling method employed was non-random and accessible in nature.

Research tool

The Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI): Skowron and Smith (2003) created a questionnaire consisting of 45 items that were inspired by Bowen's theory. This self-report questionnaire focuses on measuring individuals' differentiation, particularly about their important life connections and relationships with their family of origin. The questionnaire is divided into four subscales: Emotional reactivity, Emotional dissociation, my place, and blending with others. Each subscale consists of specific questions designed to assess different aspects of differentiation. Participants are required to rate each question on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true about me) to 6 (completely true about me). The total score for the questionnaire can range from 45 to 276. Positive scoring is assigned to questions related to certain subscales, while others are scored in reverse. A lower score on this questionnaire indicates a lower level of differentiation in an individual. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was reported to be high, with a Cronbach's alpha of 92% and subscale reliability ranging from 81% to 86% (Skowron and Smith, 2003). Aghajani, Shoghi, & Naeimi, 2014). reported a Cronbach's alpha of 84% for the questionnaire, with an internal consistency of 85% (Aghajani et al, 2014). They also specified reliability percentages for each subscale: 81% for emotional reaction, 77% for integration with others, 80% for self-position, and 85% for emotional breakdown. Overall, the instrument demonstrated acceptable reliability with a calculated Cronbach's alpha of 0.69.

The Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ): The scale was created by Christensen and Salari (1984) at the University of California, USA, to evaluate the marital relationship of couples. It comprises 35 questions that assess the behaviors of couples during three stages of marital conflict. These stages include: a) When a problem arises in the relationship (4 questions) b) Duration of discussion of the problem (18 questions) c) After discussing the communication problem (13 questions). Couples rate each behavior on a 9-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all possible) to 9 (very possible). To determine the validity of the questionnaire, Bedman, Keyser, Hallouge, and Wolf-Sdorff (1998) analyzed correlations between the CPQ scales and the Spouses' Questionnaire (PFB). The results showed a strong relationship between the CPQ scales and PFB. In a study by Samadzadeh, Shaieri, & Javidi (2013), the Cronbach's alpha value for communication patterns was 76%. The alpha coefficient for the reciprocal constructive communication pattern subscale was 61%, couple expectation/withdrawal 50%, male expectation/female withdrawal 51%, female expectation/male withdrawal 47%, and reciprocal avoidance 62%.

Rahim Conflict Resolution Inventory (ROCI-II B): Rahim (1986) developed this questionnaire to assess conflict resolution styles using the second form of the Rahim Conflict Resolution Inventory (ROCI-II B). The ROCI-II scales, consisting of three forms (A, B, C), aims to evaluate individuals' conflict resolution styles through 28 items and five subscales. Each subscale represents a specific conflict style, with the highest score indicating the predominant method of conflict resolution for the individual. Previous research found the ROCI-II questionnaire to have good reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.70 to 0.75 for the subscales and a reliability coefficient of 0.68 using the classification method. All items in the questionnaire had factor loadings of over 0.50 in the rotated factor loading table. In this study, the instrument's reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.79, signifying its acceptable reliability. Haghghi et al. (2012) observed positive and negative correlations between Rahim's Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire subscales and the CRQ questionnaire, demonstrating good convergent and divergent validity. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the five-factor model of the ROCI-II questionnaire fit well, with acceptable values for fit indices. The positive and negative correlations between the subscales of the instrument and the CRQ questionnaire further attest to the ROCI-II questionnaire's validity. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to verify the ROCI-II questionnaire's validity, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.77, indicating acceptable reliability.

Data Analysis Methods

SPSS-23 statistical software was utilized to analyze the raw data collected from the research instruments in this study. The first step involved examining the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by presenting the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for each research variable. The data analysis was divided into two sections: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In the descriptive statistics section, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis were utilized, while the inferential statistics section employed multivariate analysis of variance and independent t-tests. According to the findings, the variances were consistent across all variables due to the non-significant results of the Levine test. The multivariate analysis of variance test was used to test the research hypotheses in light of the results obtained from the Box and Levine tests.

Results

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of participants, comprising 30 women and 60 men. In the normal couple group, most male participants held a Master's degree (11, 36.6%), with fewer having an Associate's (1, 0.16%) and a Bachelor's degree (5, 0.16%). In contrast, the divorce applicant group had a majority with an Associate's degree (10, 33.3%) and fewer with a Diploma (5, 0.16%). For female participants, the normal couple group also saw most holding a Bachelor's degree (12, 40%) and a few with a Diploma (5,

0.16%), while the divorce applicant group had a majority with a Bachelor's degree (13, 43.3%) and fewer with a Diploma (4, 13.3%).

Table 1. Descriptive indicators of research variables (Conflict resolution, Differentiation, Communication patterns)

Variable	Group	Mean	SD
Integrative style (Conflict resolution)	Normal couples	24.89	4.56
	Couples seeking divorce	18.46	2.77
Compulsive style (Conflict resolution)	Normal couples	18.35	5.21
	Couples seeking divorce	11.87	3.09
Avoidant style (Conflict resolution)	Normal couples	21.62	4.07
	Couples seeking divorce	14.12	3.22
Dominant style (Conflict resolution)	Normal couples	24.86	3.42
	Couples seeking divorce	20.42	1.91
Compromising style (Conflict resolution)	Normal couples	23.73	3.61
	Couples seeking divorce	19.26	1.88
Emotional reactivity (Differentiation)	Normal couples	22.34	2.46
	Couples seeking divorce	16.53	3.01
Emotional diffusion (Differentiation)	Normal couples	24.35	3.30
	Couples seeking divorce	19.07	2.85
My position (Differentiation)	Normal couples	20.06	5.36
	Couples seeking divorce	17.29	2.52
Integration with others (Differentiation)	Normal couples	27.97	3.47
	Couples seeking divorce	19.91	6.74
Reciprocal constructive communication Communication patterns	Normal couples	12.47	2.21
	Couples seeking divorce	10.99	1.57
Extensive male/withdrawal female communication Communication patterns	Normal couples	16.42	2.16
	Couples seeking divorce	17.53	2.54
Extensive female/withdrawal male communication Communication patterns	Normal couples	8.17	2.79
	Couples seeking divorce	8.96	2.19
Overall Expectation/withdrawal communication Communication patterns	Normal couples	24.13	0.98
	Couples seeking divorce	22.10	0.99
Reciprocal avoidance communication Communication patterns	Normal couples	8.47	1.25
	Couples seeking divorce	9.30	1.14

Based on the findings in Table 2, it was observed that there is a notable distinction in all aspects of differentiation between the two groups ($P=0.01$). The average scores for these components were higher among normal couples compared to divorce applicants, thus confirming the initial hypothesis of the study regarding differentiation differences.

Table 2 also revealed significant variance in mutual constructive communication, male expectation/female withdrawal communication, female expectation/male withdrawal communication, and mutual avoidance communication between the two groups ($P=0.01$). The average scores for mutual constructive communication and female expectation/male withdrawal communication were higher for normal couples, while the average scores for male expectation/female withdrawal communication and mutual avoidance communication were higher for divorce applicants, confirming the second hypothesis regarding communication pattern differences. Furthermore, Table 2 indicated a significant distinction in all conflict resolution components between the two groups. The average scores for these components were higher among normal couples compared to divorce applicants, thus confirming the third hypothesis of the study regarding conflict resolution differences ($P=0.01$).

Table 2. Results of multivariate analysis of variance test for comparing variables in two groups

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	P
Emotional reactivity (Differentiation)	2108.30	1	2108.30	278.85	0.01
Emotional diffusion (Differentiation)	1742.40	1	1742.40	183.03	0.01
My position (Differentiation)	461.64	1	461.64	27.44	0.01
Integration with others (Differentiation)	136.90	1	4056.20	141.01	0.01
Reciprocal constructive communication Communication patterns	136.90	1	136.90	37.30	0.01
Extensive female/withdrawal male communication Communication patterns	76.18	1	76.18	13.67	0.01
Extensive female/withdrawal male communication Communication patterns	91.20	1	91.20	14.53	0.01
Overall Expectation/withdrawal communication Communication patterns	0.01	1	0.01	0.10	0.94
Integrative style (Conflict resolution)	2585.66	1	2585.66	181.48	0.01
Compulsive style (Conflict resolution)	2624.40	1	2624.40	143.09	0.01
Dominant style (Conflict resolution)	3519.38	1	3519.38	261.75	0.01
Compromising style (Conflict resolution)	1227.66	1	1227.66	160.25	0.01
Avoidant style (Conflict resolution)	1249.92	1	1249.92	150.58	0.01

Discussion

The primary goal of this research was to investigate the distinctions, methods of communication, and approaches to resolving conflicts among both normal couples and couples seeking divorce in Tehran. Based on the findings, there is a significant difference in all aspects of differentiation between the two groups. The average score for these components was higher in normal couples compared to the other group. This confirms the first hypothesis of the study, which focused on the differentiation gap between normal couples and divorce applicants. Like other studies (Sheikh et al (2013); Pouragha, & Sotoodeh Navroodi, (2023); Rezaeian, Massumy, & Hosseiniyan (2018).

A study conducted by Pouragha et al (2023) showed that there is a significant difference between the two groups of divorce applicants and non-divorce applicants in all aspects of differentiation of self, couple burnout and emotional intimacy. Also, there was a significant difference in the total score of differentiation of self, couple burnout and emotional intimacy between the two groups and the mean of differentiation of self and emotional intimacy in the group of couples who did not file for divorce and the mean couple burnout was higher in couples seeking divorce. Moreover, Sheikh et al (2013) conducted a study on differentiation and self-concept in women who experienced domestic violence, comparing divorced and non-divorced individuals. Divorced women scored higher in differentiation and had a more positive self-view compared to non-divorced women. The findings of Rezaeian et al (2018) indicated that there were notable differences in communication patterns and sexual satisfaction between divorce-applicant (DA) and non-divorce-applicant (NDA) couples, although both groups had similar levels of differentiation. As a result, one can infer that the way couples communicate and their satisfaction with their sex life can impact their likelihood of getting divorced.

The concept of differentiation is linked to the lack of clear boundaries to uphold personal identity and intimate connections. Individuals with high levels of differentiation possess the skills to handle their interpersonal relationships effectively. Individuals who exhibit the desired level of differentiation possess self-awareness of their emotions and can effectively recognize the key components of emotional experiences - "what, why, and how" (Khabiri Pooya et al, 2022). They are capable of making thoughtful assessments of situations. In intimate relationships, these individuals cultivate a sense of self that is cohesive, enabling them to maintain stable, peaceful, and satisfying relationships without losing their identity or experiencing emotional breakdowns to manage inner conflicts. On the other hand, individuals with lower levels of differentiation are more prone to merging with others, leading to feeling overwhelmed and creating psychological or emotional conflicts, ultimately giving in to tension (Yalçınkaya, 2019). Bowen's theory notion that individuals with a greater capacity to take an I-position in their relationships with others experience better dyadic adjustment, perhaps because they are better at creating functional affective relationships and responding empathically to their partners. In both men and women, the I-position had a positive effect on personal dyadic adjustment (actor effect) (Lampis et al ,2019).

When discussing the findings of the study, one can look at the structural theory, which suggests that marital conflict arises when each partner brings the rules and patterns from their own family into their new family. Both partners need to be able to adjust their

expectations and behaviors to fit the needs and rules of their spouse, separate from their family of origin. Bowen's theory on intergenerational relationships explains that many conflicts in marriage stem from the lack of appropriate separation between the couple (Wagner, 2019). According to Bowen, individuals who have high levels of differentiation can think independently and separate their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and emotions from others. It is likely that the couples experiencing conflicts in marriage did not have a high level of separation when they first got married. Despite forming a new unit, they have not been able to fully break away from their families of origin. Generally, in our society, it is commonly observed that married couples may lack the knowledge and resources needed to establish a successful family and marital bond. As a result, they often rely on behaviors and patterns learned from their own families and past relationships rather than developing the necessary skills for this unique partnership (Mohammadi, & Alibakhshi, 2021). Individuals who are differentiated take responsibility for their behavior and do not seek to burden others with additional responsibilities. They approach conflicts in a way that prioritizes their concerns, as well as those of others, leading to less conflict in their marriage as both parties share responsibility for the outcome. In contrast, undifferentiated individuals expect others to take care of their well-being and tend to use a dominant conflict resolution style that focuses on gaining power and winning at all costs, even if it means disrespecting the rights of others. They often disregard their spouse's opinions and resort to aggressive tactics such as shouting or using force. Additionally, they may employ an avoidant approach by changing the subject or walking away from conflicts, which ultimately results in repeated conflicts in their marriage (Wagner et al, 2019).

According to this research, there are significant differences in how communication is shared between happily married couples and those wanting a divorce. The two groups showed different communication styles, including constructive and withdrawn communication from both men and women. In normal couples, the mean scores for reciprocal constructive communication and female expectant/male withdrawing communication were higher than male expectant/female withdrawing communication and mutual avoidance communication in divorce-seeking couples. The findings confirm the second hypothesis of the study, which suggests that communication patterns vary between couples in healthy relationships and those seeking divorce. Rezaeian, Massumy, & Hosseiniyan (2018); Almardani Someeh, Gorbanih, Heedarirad, & Beh Afarin, (2021); Bukhari, & Hai, (2023). Almardani et al (2021) found that marital satisfaction is linked to communication skills such as insight, verbal expression, listening skills, and emotional management. However, there was no significant relationship with assertiveness. Etemadi et al (2014) demonstrated how communication skills, communication patterns, and conflict resolution styles in women affect marital intimacy. They found that all communication skills (such as assertiveness, understanding the message, and listening) were positively linked to marital intimacy. Communication patterns and conflict resolution styles also played a significant role in marital intimacy. Another study by Belyad, Nahidpoor, Azadi, Yadegari (2014) focused on the impact of family background on self-differentiation and marital conflicts. The research showed that a healthy family environment, with components like intimacy and independence, can lead to fewer conflicts and better self-differentiation in marriage. Couples' expression and listening

behaviors are referred to as their communication styles. While some couples are honest and open with one another, others can try to avoid disagreements or suppress facts. Intimacy can be directly impacted by communication patterns because these might result in misunderstandings, mistrust, and feelings of rejection. Couples' methods for handling disputes and conflicts are referred to as conflict resolution styles. While some couples are combative and aggressive, others are more tolerant and docile (Bukhari, & Hai, (2023). Researchers define hostile conflict as the interaction pattern of a negative couple. They also argue that the four habits they call as Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling) increase conflicts and lead couples towards divorce. In this interaction pattern, arguments are frequent and quite heated, and couples' insult and humiliate each other. In addition, unwillingness to listen, lack of emotional interest, and higher negative behaviors than positive ones are seen more in communication patterns (Gen, Göktaş, & Şendoğan, 2021).

Based on the research results, the mean scores for conflict resolution were higher in normal couples than in those seeking divorce. The results confirm the initial hypothesis that there is a difference in conflict resolution between normal couples and those applying for divorce. The study conducted by Wanger, (2019); Gen, Göktaş, & Şendoğan, (2021); Krueger et al, (2022); Morelli et al, (2023) support this finding. Almardani et al (2021) showed that marital satisfaction has a positive relationship with the components of conflict resolution techniques, i.e., integration, avoidance, competence, and being bound and has an inverse relationship with the component of dominance. According to Ünal, & Akgün (2022), the literature indicates that constructive conflict resolution (considering conflict as a social problem that could be solved with cooperation, striving to satisfy the needs of both parties, and finding out solutions together) leads to an increase in marital satisfaction and marital adjustment. Destructive behaviors with hostile intentions focused on self-interest (physical and verbal aggression and oppression) seem to be negatively related to marital adjustment and satisfaction. Besides these negative coping behaviors, it will be beneficial for spouses to gain awareness of behaviors such as submission, protective buffering, and underestimating the coping capabilities of the partner with an overprotective attitude, which are not based on hostile intentions in dealing with problems but can have devastating consequences in the long term. Gen et al (2021) highlights significant differences in conflict resolution skills between married individuals and those going through a divorce. The same author also notes that couples undergoing divorce tend to have weaker conflict resolution abilities. In a longitudinal study conducted by Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, and Gottman (2017) involving 843 married couples over a period of 30 years, it was found that conflict patterns play a crucial role in determining the success or failure of a marriage. Similarly, Njoroge (2017) reported a strong relationship between marital stability and conflict resolution styles, with individuals in happy marriages often utilizing the validating conflict resolution style. This style involves behaviors such as openly sharing thoughts, being sensitive to their partner's feelings, and prioritizing their partner's wishes over their own (Kavak (2018). Soltani Ramezan Zadeh et al, (2020) discovered that teaching couples communication and conflict resolution skills can improve their relationship, decrease conflicts, and boost their mental well-being. Thus, when spouses have positive conflict resolution styles and constructive communication

patterns, establishing verbal communication about sexuality may become easy for them and this open communication may indirectly increase their positive thoughts about their relationships. Verbal communication of spouses about sexuality has been found to increase their sexual satisfaction and contentment (Gen et al, 2021).

This study also considers limitations such as the inability to control the duration of conflicts in marriage, the failure to assess individuals for psychiatric health, and the lack of control over intervening factors. It is recommended to consider the lack of control over the duration of conflicts in marriage and the lack of assessment of individuals in terms of psychiatric health. Future research should focus on examining the duration of marital conflicts since marriage. Additionally, it is recommended to explore the comparison of treatment programs in other cultures within the country. Skill-building programs and workshops in schema-focused couples therapy should include training in managing and regulating emotions, identifying positive and negative emotions, and teaching problem-solving styles to improve strategies that increase positive emotions and reduce negative emotions. Lastly, interaction analysis training programs should be provided in clinics, infertility treatment centers, and education centers by trained therapists as weekly programs to enhance the psychological well-being of couples with marital conflict in interpersonal communication.

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