



## The Effectiveness of Group Counseling based on the Choice Theory on Reducing Marital Conflicts

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**Abstract:** The Purpose of this research was to study the effectiveness of group counseling based on the Choice Theory on Reducing Marital Conflicts. The research population included women referring to Jihad Daneshgahi counseling center of Hormozgan, Iran in 2013. It was performed using the testing method; therefore, a total number of 30 people (15 for the test and 15 for the control group) were selected as the statistical sample. The required information was collected through MCQ questionnaire in two steps before and after the counseling. The test group was counseled based on the Choice Theory, and the control group was counseled without direction. The results showed that the group Counseling Based on the Choice Theory is significantly effective on Reducing Marital Conflicts and each of its subscales.

**Keywords:** Counseling, Choice Theory, Marital conflicts

### INTRODUCTION

As a good and successful marriage is one of the protecting factors against mental disorders, marital conflicts are among risk making factors in mental pathology. At present, numerous theoretical views are seeking an elaboration for marital satisfaction and solving its conflicts with different approaches<sup>1</sup>.

Marital conflict arises from the inconsistency between husband and wife in their type of needs and the method of its fulfillment, self-orientation, difference in their needs, behavioral designs and irresponsible behavior towards their marital relationship and marriage<sup>2</sup>. Consider marital conflicts arising from the reaction to personal differences and it shows an abnormal condition when it is intense to the extent that the feelings of anger, enmity, revenge, disgust, jealousy and verbal and physical misbehavior dominate their relationships and it turns to destruction and ruin conditions. According to Rice (mentioned by Saeedi et al.)<sup>3</sup> and Paterson et al.<sup>2</sup>, marital conflict is a type of marital relationship where there is hostile behavior such as insult and blame, criticism and physical attack, and couples feel enmity, revenge, disgust and

anger towards each other and each believes his spouse is an undesirable and maladjusted one who causes offense and agony<sup>4</sup>.

These therapies include cognitive and cognitive-behavioral views, emotional therapy system, the reality therapy of Glasser, and systematic motive therapy. William Glasser, the American psychiatrist whose theory is known as reality therapy, presented his new theory in 1998. He called this new theory the Choice Theory because, according to him, all actions we do are considered behavior and almost all of our behavior is chosen<sup>5</sup>.

The Reality Therapy is a method in psychotherapy based on the principle that we choose our own behavior and we are responsible for our life and what we do, feel, and think about. People are helped to control their own behavior and make better choices in their lives<sup>6</sup>. The most emphasized points in this theory are freedom and responsibility. In this view, behavior is a type of choice made by an individual and each individual is responsible for his choices. The Reality Therapy is more emphasizing the point that achieving a successful identity is resulted from doing successful action, and an individual's power of choice is an important factor in his mental health. The thing that makes distance between the healthy and unhealthy individuals are accepting responsibility, living in the present moment, making aware and correct choices, the power of controlling the issues, and being aware of the real needs<sup>7</sup>.

Many researches show That Reality Therapy has an important role in increasing the amount of mental health in different age groups and the application of this theory in individual and group methods has attracted many therapists' attention on its application, and its greater application over other methods was confirmed in repeated researches<sup>6</sup>.

The purpose of Reality Therapy as a therapeutic model for the Choice Theory is to cultivate the feeling of accepting responsibility and to create a successful identity in an individual. The attempt in this approach is that the individual recognizes his short-term and long-term purposes in life and starts to define them frankly, evaluates the way of achieving the purpose, and chooses the ones leading to more desirable results among them and experiences a better and more positive feeling toward himself. The present research seeks the purpose of showing whether group counseling based on the Choice Theory will cause a reduction in marital conflicts. In line with this, training group counseling based on the Choice Theory as the independent variable and the reduction of marital conflicts as the dependent variable were studied and analyzed in a test design of pretest-posttest with a control group.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The statistical population of the research included women referring to Jihad Daneshgahi counseling center who had problems in marital relationship. The statistical sample included 30 of the women who were ready to participate in this

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design voluntarily. First, the Marital Conflicts Questionnaire (MCQ) was performed on them. Then they were divided into two test and control groups of 15 based on general scores of marital conflicts using matching method in a way that the average and variance of marital conflict scores was 81.33 for the test and 81.53 for the control group and no significant differences were observed between the two.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indexes of marital conflict scores and its dimensions for the Experimental and Control groups

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.
<b>Marital Conflicts</b>	Experimental.	81.33	22.37	-0.401	0.6
	Control	81.53	20.04		
<b>Reduction in sexual intercourse</b>	Experimental.	8.76	3.169	-0.86	0.3
	Control	9.43	2.824		
<b>Reduction in sexual intercourse</b>	Experimental.	10.1	2.682	0.275	0.7
	Control	9.9	2.940		
<b>Increase in emotional reactions</b>	Experimental.	19.83	5.795	-1.34	0.1
	Control	20.86	5.864		
<b>Increase in attracting support of child</b>	Experimental.	12.26	4.033	-0.376	0.7
	Control	12.63	3.508		
<b>Increase in personal relationship with one's relatives</b>	Experimental.	14.8	4.915	0.183	0.8
	Control	14.6	3.409		
<b>Reduction in family relation with one's spouse's relatives and friends</b>	Experimental.	13	3.562	1.044	0.3
	Control	12	3.850		
<b>Separating financial affairs from each other</b>	Experimental.	15.66	3.386	-0.206	0.6
	Control	16.32	4.138		

Then the experimental group became familiar with principles and basics of the Choice Theory in the marital quality improvement in 6 weekly 90-minute sessions. For holding the sessions, the subject of each one was explained at the beginning for about 30 minutes. Then the subject was presented by discussing and telling the experiences, solutions, and evaluating the solutions in group counseling form. After the six weeks of group counseling, the Marital Conflicts Questionnaire was performed between both the test and the control group that the results are shown below.

**Table 2.** The program of group counseling based on the Choice Theory

Session Number	Subject
First	Introducing the Choice Theory and the internal and external control concepts.
Second	Introducing the desirable world ... and its components.
Third	Introducing fundamental needs and familiarity with their intensity and outlining their profile.
Forth	Training the way of talking about needs with different intensities.
Fifth	Familiarity with the general behavior concept and creating good responsibility to satisfy the needs.
Sixth	Introducing destructive habits of external control and replacing them with essential skills.

## RESULTS

The covariance test was used in order to analyze the collected data of the research.

**Table 3.** The results of marital conflict's covariance analysis in test and control groups

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	65.5	12.013	15	3891.204	1	3891.204	40.679	0.001
1	82.1	17.852	15					

R Squared = .792 (Adjusted R Squared = .785)

According to table 3, the results of marital conflict's covariance analysis show that the average of marital conflicts for the test group was 65.5% and this amount for the control group was 82.1%. The average status shows that the marital conflicts in the control group are more than the average for the test group. Regarding F=40.679 and the significance level of 0.0001, this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on reducing marital conflicts. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is 79% effective on reducing marital conflicts.

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**Table 4.** The results of covariance analysis of reducing cooperation in experimental and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	6.76	2.112	15	52.777	1	52.777	38.203	.001
Control	9.2	2.708	15					

R Squared = .851 (Adjusted R Squared = .846)

According to table 4, the results of covariance analysis of marital conflicts show that the average of cooperation reduction is 6.76% in the test group and this amount was 9.2% in the control group. The average status shows that the cooperation reduction is more in the control group. Regarding  $F=38.679$  and the significance level of 0.0001, this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on increasing cooperation. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is 85% effective on increasing cooperation.

**Table 5.** The results of covariance analysis of reducing sexual relationship in test and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	7.86	2.388	15	101.247	1	101.247	47.465	.001
Control	11.16	3.195	15					

R Squared = .736 (Adjusted R Squared = .726)

According to table 5, the results of covariance analysis of reducing sexual relationship show that the average of sexual relationship reduction is 7.86% in the test group and this amount was 11.16% in the control group. The average status shows that the sexual relationship has increased in the test group. Regarding  $F=47.465$  and the significance level of 0.0001, this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on increasing sexual relationship. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is 73% effective on increasing sexual relationship.

**Table 6.** The results of covariance analysis of increasing emotional reactions in test and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	10.66	3.066	15	223.118	1	223.118	28.087	.001
Control	20.16	5.681	15					

R Squared = .807 (Adjusted R Squared = .801)

According to table 6, the results of covariance analysis of increasing emotional reactions show that the average of emotional reaction's increase is 10.66% in the test group and this amount was 20.16% in the control group. The average status shows that the emotional reactions are more in the control group. Regarding  $F=28.087$  and the significance level of 0.0001, this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on reducing emotional reactions. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is 80% effective on reducing emotional reactions.

**Table 7.** The results of covariance analysis of increasing children's support attraction in test and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	7.9	2.023	15	137.974	1	137.974	17.988	.001
Control	12.03	2.846	15					

R Squared = .474 (Adjusted R Squared = .455)

According to table 7, the results of covariance analysis of increasing children's support attraction show that the average of increasing children's support attraction dimension is 7.9% in the test group and this amount was 12.03% in the control group. The average status shows that the children's support attraction increase is more in the control group. Regarding  $F=17.988$  and the significance level of 0.0001, this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on reducing the level of children's satisfaction attraction increase. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is 47% effective on reducing children's satisfaction attraction.

**Table 8.** The results of covariance analysis of increasing an individual's relationship with his own relatives in test and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	7.26	2.638	15	228.790	1	228.790	19.901	.001
Control	13.7	3.163	15					

R Squared = .369 (Adjusted R Squared = .347)

According to table 8, the results of covariance analysis of increasing an individual's relationship with his own relatives show that the average of increasing an individual's relationship with his own relatives is 7.26% in the test group and this amount was 13.7% in the control group. The average status shows that the increase in

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an individual's relationship with his own relatives is more in the control group. Regarding  $F=19.901$  and the significance level of  $0.0001$ , this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on reducing the level of increase in an individual's relationship with his own relatives. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is  $36\%$  effective on reducing the level of increasing aspect of an individual's relationship with his own relatives.

**Table 9.** The results of covariance analysis of reducing familial relationship with spouse relatives in test and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	8.33	2.708	15	216.671	1	216.671	49.421	.001
Control	12.13	4.133	15					

R Squared = .693 (Adjusted R Squared = .682)

According to the table above, the results of covariance analysis of reducing familial relationship with spouse relatives show that the average of reducing familial relationship with spouse relatives is  $8.33\%$  in the test group and this amount was  $12.13\%$  in the control group. The average status shows that the reduction of familial relationship with spouse relatives is more in the control group. Regarding  $F=49.421$  and the significance level of  $0.0001$ , this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on increasing the level of familial relationship with spouse relatives. The results also show that the Reality Therapy group counseling is  $69\%$  effective on increasing the level of familial relationship with spouse relatives.

**Table 10.** The results of covariance analysis of separating financial affairs from each other in test and control groups.

Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Experimental	10.53	1.814	15	206.326	1	206.326	28.714	.001
Control	16.2	3.726	15					

R Squared = .506 (Adjusted R Squared = .489)

According to table 10, the results of covariance analysis of separating financial affairs from each other show that the average of separating financial affairs from each other is  $10.53\%$  in the test group and this amount was  $16.2\%$  in the control group. The average status shows that the separation of financial affairs from each other is more in the control group. Regarding  $F=28.714$  and the significance level of  $0.0001$ , this status shows that the Reality Therapy group counseling was effective on reducing the level of separating financial affairs from each other. The results also show that the

Reality Therapy group counseling is 50% effective on reducing the separation of financial affairs from each other.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Purpose of this research was to study the effectiveness of group counseling based on the Choice Theory on Reducing Marital Conflicts in a group of women referring to counseling center. According to the data in table 1, no significant difference exists between the test and control groups with respect to marital conflicts in none of the seven areas of marital conflicts in the pretest stage, but this amount is significantly different in those areas at the security level of more than 99% in the posttest stage. The results of this research corresponds to the findings of researches performed on the effect of Reality Therapy and group counseling based on the Choice Theory on increasing the amount of self-confidence in students<sup>8</sup>. The results of this research are also in line with the studies of Herman<sup>8</sup>, Cadna<sup>9</sup>, Glasser<sup>10</sup>, Dub<sup>11</sup>, and McManus<sup>12</sup>.

Group counseling based on the Choice Theory showed that it has a major effect on individual's recognition and realism. One of the reasons for the reduction of marital conflicts in 6 sessions according to the Reality Therapy is that the clients were trained to recognize their fundamental needs and fulfill them in a correct way during these sessions, because satisfying the fundamental needs in a correct way causes a reduction in marital conflicts and disputes, and it also seems that the clients reached this conclusion that if their behavior does not lead them to satisfy their needs, choose another behavior and accept the responsibility for the consequence of their choice. Therefore, regarding the mentioned points and the performed researches, recognition can be achieved on the cause of a reduction in marital conflicts based on the Reality Therapy.

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