

## Evaluation of the effectiveness of stress coping skills training *based on therapeutic common factors* on marital adjustment and conflict resolution styles in infertile women

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**Abstract:** Infertility is a complex issue that affects individuals and groups, also it has serious implications for the mental and social well-being of those involved. The aim of this review was to assess the effects of stress coping skills training *based on therapeutic common factors* on conflict resolution styles and marital adjustment in infertile women. The statistical community was exclusively comprised of infertile women who came to a Fertility Clinic in Mashhad. The studied sample embraces 20 figures, chosen in random assignment and put randomly into experimental and control groups—each have 10 members. In addition, to gather data, two types of questionnaires are distributed and applied; Revised dyadic adjustment scale (Aspanyr), conflict resolution styles questionnaire (Rahimi). the research methodology is carried in semi-experimental method and the examination of Analysis of covariance is used in data analyses as well. The findings show that the instructions done to overcome stress, lead to marital adjustment in the experimental group as infertile women. The results of this study clearly stated that appropriate coping mechanisms, especially in infertile women who are facing critical situations severely, can help them confront and solve their problems.

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**Key Words:** The skill of coping stress, *therapeutic common factors* , Revised dyadic adjustment scale, conflict resolution styles, Infertile women

### Introduction

Fertility is defined as the adjustment of production and reproduction, it requires substantial ability to initiate and maintain pregnancy. Being barren is attributed to partners who decide to have a baby and their attempts have been failed even though they have decided not to use any pregnancy prevention method for a year. So they demand medical treatment and the specialist have diagnosed them as infertile (1). Infertile women are among those members of society who are exposed to psychological vulnerability. Nowadays, at least one out of six couples, who anticipate surviving their own breed, is the victim of infertility crisis unintentionally around the world (2). Although, infertility is not recognized as a disease, it creates various emotional and socio-psychic disorders. Infertility threatens the mutual life to a host of problems such as painstaking medical treatments, problems in sexual inclination and sexual discourses, feebleness, guiltiness, desperation, furiousness, depression and emptiness. On the other hand, such troubles can be reckoned as one of the reasons of infertility. (3) Studies indicate that infertility provokes extreme and unbearable reactions in couples; it jeopardizes their ego and may ruin their sense of adjustment. Likewise, lacking self control, indignation, guiltiness, embarrassment and detest tarnish couples relation and foster changing their attitude (4).

The existing studies report that the negative results of pregnancy test, worsen symptoms of depression in those women who have undergone fertility treatment. However, infertile women affected by the negative effects of infertility may be entangled with marital conflict (5). Marital conflict —

daily disturbance to permanent disagreements are categorized in two forms: solvable or unsolvable. None the less, if partners can distinguish their conflict and know their categorization, they can transform their reciprocal resolution into an accustomed behavior and solve the conflict constructively (6). Submissiveness is one of the relative elements which has been referred to in many studies. Today, submissiveness has become part of people's life and it is undeniable. A tense atmosphere is the one which is threatening to the person and he/she is not capable of acquiring coping skills to accommodate with condition. Infertility is a kind of tense mode as well because it jeopardizes the process of expecting baby which is a valuable event (7).

The study of Sibel and Teimor (8) suggest that the infertile couples believe external events have more effect on the creation of psychological forces than the issue of infertility itself and couples face financial problems and upheaval in life and occupation majorly. The previous studies in submission have emphasized the fact that submissiveness is not the destructive element which put the health of behavior in danger itself, whereas the mode of personal evaluation and the ways to come over it threatens the behavior. In other words, confrontment is reckoned as an important moderator in the relationship between tension and marital conflict (9).

After observing and comparing the fertile and infertile women, Gregory (10) reported that barren women who face high levels of marital conflict, suffer from opposition, indignation and bear intensive psychological pressures.

Halford and Sanders(11) has referred the existence of extreme psychological pressures social reclusiveness in infertile women.

In another study which has been done on 449 infertility couples by Hotlist and Miller (12), the diagnosis and Fertile medications may create depression, anxiety, loss of self-confidence, Psychological pressures and decrease in compatibility among infertile couples. Mahler (13) find out that 96% of infertile couples suffer from dissatisfaction, 81% from hopelessness, 82% from apprehensiveness and 65% from rage.

Koerner & Fitzpatrick (14) find out that infertile women endure more stress than the fertile ones and this phenomena is an apprehensive process itself. Likewise, the result of Will's(15) research, which has been done on 150 infertile and 150 fertile women, restates that the issue of stress is markedly apparent in fertile women than other ones. At the end, as the previous researches have highlighted, such amount of stress is higher than normal in this society sample. Thus, such community is concerned to show whether this training can be effective in the volatile situation or not?

most researches have been done till day (16;17;18) are related to the skills of coping stress in infertile without considering a specific approach. Since, infertility is nominated as a cause itself and the issue of therapeutic common factors is a new approach in the scope of psychology which no research has been found to consider it in Iran, Researches pay attention to the instructions to combat stress according to its methods. Furthermore, they decided to increase the rate of marital adjustment in infertile women who face high levels of stress than other women.

The positive outcomes of instructions to overcome stress based on the therapeutic common factors sound collate with the findings of the following researchers who concern the feedback of instruction on the family function: Taft & Nehrke (19), Watt & Cappeliez (20); Hirsch and Mouratoglou (21), Haight and Hendrix (22). Noteworthy, the findings of Hight et al (23) Stated the higher effectiveness of such instruction to other cognitive therapies. Consequently, it can be suggested that the instruction to combat stress basically on the therapeutic common factors not only decreases the rate of stress, but also accords with the cognitive therapy approaches. as the Cognitive restructuring of negative experiences is one of the common techniques of cognitive therapy and therapy based on therapeutic common factors.

The process of investigating and curing infertility embraces couples and their families with high pressures and numerous personal and social problems. As a result, by identifying the applicable approaches to overcome encounterment, we can instruct them to deal with psychological pressures so that they will be less involved in the outcome of such crisis and can get practical solutions.

Since learning the skills of overcoming stress is considered as one of the features to alleviate it, we need to alter these skills in infertile women in a positive way.

(24;12;13). Various studies have shown that modifying the skills of reciprocation can be an important goal in the interference of marital conflict (25; 26; 16). Now, based on the background of the study, a question may raise here; Are instructions to combat stress constructively in alleviating the conflict resolution styles in infertile women? And can they raise the level of marital adjustment in Infertile women?

### Methodology

The present methodology is Semi-experimental. The statistical community is composed of the patients that came to a Fertility Clinic in Mashhad. To choose the members of the community, numerous requests have been sent to the people who came there and asked for joining the group. In the next step, the studied sample embraced 20 figures who were chosen in random assignment and put randomly into experimental and control groups—each had 10 members. In addition, to gather data, two types of questionnaires are distributed and done; Aspanyr (17) for marital adjustment, Rahim (16) for conflict resolution styles.

**Revised dyadic adjustment scale:** This questionnaire is designed by Babsy, Keran, Christian and Larsen (28). The original framework of this scale is done by Aspanyr (14) based on the theory of Lewis (29) pertaining the quality of marital relationship.

After forming his theory on the quality of marital life, Finchman & Bradbury (11) introduced this questionnaire as a suitable mean to assess the marital quality as well.

This questionnaire is consists of 14 questions which are taken from the original paper, including 32 ones that developed by Aspanyr. a 5 likert scale (0= completely disagree to 5= completely agree) was used to assess the degree of agreement. This scale is comprised of three subscales which represent the total score of marital qualities: sympathy and agreement, cohesiveness, and satisfaction. In fact, the higher the marks the higher the quality of marital life will be (28). The questionnaire has been studied by Isa Nejad in Iran (29), and the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0/90 by Cronbach's alpha and the validity coefficient was 0/76.

**conflict resolution styles questionnaire:** This scale is composed of a 47 items is designed based on Lazarus and Folkman (27) theories and it measures four skills of overcoming stress— Cooperation, Adaptation, Competitive, Avoidant style—in the Likert scale with 5 degrees ranging from one to five. They were ranged: never, seldom, sometimes, often and always. This questionnaire was done on 700 girl students at high school. Karami and Zynlkhany (18) reported the reliability of the questionnaire, based on Cronbach's alpha, to be 0/91 and validity 0/89.

At the end, the empirical data obtained from inferential statistics (analysis of covariance analysis) has been analyzed with SPSS 16 version of software.

*The description of stress coping skills training sessions based on therapeutic common factors*

Sessions	Purpose	Content
First	Introducing the members	introducing the members with each other- determining the rules and goals and creating a sense of obligation to continue group meetings- Asking members to share their personal experiences about the infertility problems
Second	Familiarizing the relational boundaries in private life- Reducing sensitivity to others' ideas	discussion about the unspoken beliefs and attitudes about infertility and Unconscious roles in the family and Distinguishing between rational and irrational beliefs towards others
Third	focusing on the Behavioral attitudinal blocks	discussion about visible and invisible, and spontaneous activities- Showing slides on attitudinal barriers with group discussion
Forth	Attentional fixation-creating a stable basis for developing intimacy	Familiarizing the members to their Psychological needs such as The need for state, love and...
Fifth	Being familiar with boundaries and control areas on private life	Using mindful imagery to determine what program is useful in a particular situation (Following the conditions or controlling his or herself.
Sixth	Determining the Reality-identity discrepancy	Discussion about the conflict acceptance between the person's mind and reality- review the member's coping skills with such conflicts- Responsibility for the behavior through group discussion
Seventh	Understanding the nature of emotions as part of human nature- Acceptance of infertility anxiety	Acceptance of infertility- starting constructive and influential activities in the life of every member by discussion about their daily activities - Explaining the importance of emotions in human existence through the examples – group discussion
Eighth	Integration and cohesion - and taking the posttest	A brief review of previous meetings and evaluating the training results

**Results:****Table 1:** Results of analysis of Covariance to compare experimental and control groups in posttest scores in **marital adjustment**

Significance level	F	Mean of squares	Df	Total squares	Change sources
0.02	6.44	207.5	1	207.5	Post test
0.00	48.53	1564.5	1	1564/5	Group
		32.24	17	548.1	Error

The results in Table 1 showed that the stress coping skills training was significant in increasing marital adjustment ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 2:** Results of analysis of Covariance to compare experimental and control groups in **Cooperation style** in posttest scores

Significance level	F	Mean of squares	Df	Total squares	Change sources
0/07	3/83	13/23	1	13/23	Cooperation- posttest
0/00	60/24	208/25	1	208/25	Group
		3/46	17	58/77	Error

The results in Table 2 showed that the difference between mean scores of infertile women were significant in Cooperation style of marital conflict resolution in the test and control groups ( $p < 0/001$ ). On the other words, the stress coping skills training was effective on Cooperation style in conflict resolution.

**Table 3:** Results of analysis of Covariance to compare experimental and control groups in **Adaptation style** in posttest scores

Significance level	F	Mean of squares	Df	Total squares	Change sources
0/01	9/19	14/80	1	14/80	Adaptation- posttest
0/00	30/15	48/59	1	48/59	Group
		1/61	17	27/40	Error

The results in Table 3 showed that the difference between mean scores of infertile women were significant in Adaptation style of marital conflict resolution in the test and control groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). On the other words, the stress coping skills training was effective on Adaptation style in conflict resolution.

**Table 4:** Results of analysis of Covariance to compare experimental and control groups in **Competitive style** in posttest scores

Significance level	F	Mean squares of	Degree of freedom	Total squares	Change sources
0/00	35/13	148/93	1	148/93	Competitive-posttest
0/00	24/98	105/91	1	105/91	Group
		4/24	17	72/07	Error

The results in Table 4 showed that the difference between mean scores of infertile women were significant in Competitive style of marital conflict resolution in the test and control groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). On the other words, the stress coping skills training was effective on Competitive style in conflict resolution.

**Table 5:** Results of analysis of Covariance to compare experimental and control groups in **Avoidant style** in posttest scores

Significance level	F	Mean squares of	Degree of freedom	Total squares	Change sources
0/01	7/34	28/12	1	28/12	Avoidant-posttest
0/01	10/24	39/21	1	39/21	Group
		3/83	17	65/08	Error

The results in Table 5 showed that the difference between mean scores of infertile women were significant in Avoidant style of marital conflict resolution in the test and control groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). On the other words, the stress coping skills training was effective on Avoidant style in conflict resolution.

## Discussion and Conclusion

After instructing the skills of coping stress, the results of this research has announced that there is a profound difference between the experimental group and the control one in the scope of adjustment and the conflict resolution styles ( $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, such instruction elevates the mode of marital adjustment and ameliorates conflict resolution styles in the experimental group in comparison with the controlled one.

The results of this research and the ones obtained by various figures like Zyaee (17), and Javad Jalali (18), Mahler (13), Haji Abul-Zadeh (16), Wills (15), Sayers, Cohen, Fresco & Blanch (30) Suggested that many infertile women, who are seeking therapy, lack the required skills to overcome stress. To develop the current supposition, infertile women have learned how to deal with and overcome stressful circumstances and this lesson have developed their compatibility. The encounter issue is a dynamic process which entails many acts to adopt the personal demands and solutions conspicuously.

The quality of the couple's relation has been enhanced by instructing the ways of overcoming stress. The objective and behavioral methods of the meetings are focused constructively on the actions which have been done during their disputation with their spouses. The framework of the instruction is expanded in a way which contains the documents that they have considered for their husbands. Another critical instructive behavior considered to overcome stress is conflict resolution styles. This issue has great impact on the feedback of cooperation in marital adjustment. The direct effect of overcoming stress in controlling the unpleasant and critical conditions of life is the next issue

which is going to be considered. This impression brings about constructive solutions when the problem occurs and it includes improving conflict resolution styles and satisfaction among couples. The potency of couples in controlling indignation and stress can solidify not only the base of family in confronting challenges and unpleasant situations, but also can elevate their rate of adjustment in solving stressful events.

The results taken from this research is in accordance with Marioles & Allen (30) module. They have asserted that infertile women are in search of emotional adhesiveness because they have undergone numerous psychological pressures such as

the internal instinct to have babies, having disputation with their partner and the fear of losing him, the decrease in having relation with their partner-- his relatives and friends (as they have reproached her) and the inability to express themselves. Couples can have the utmost satisfaction from their marital life in condition that they trust in each other, share their external interests, discuss their matters gently and try to change their views.

Since the adjustment to overcome the problems can facilitate the ease tensions (and the prospective ones) and decrease the symptoms of pathological aspect, a constructive instruction is required to improve the styles of confronting tensions in infertile women. In addition, a healthy procedure can be thought to help them overcoming the stressful conditions (27). The outcome of this research has clearly stated that the proper confronting procedures can aid infertile women to face intensive and critical circumstances and resolve their problems.

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