

## The effectiveness of reality therapy training (Choice theory) on Social Role taking and self-differentiation of couples

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** One of the important factors that lead to the formation of satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, especially marital relationships, is social role-taking. Self-differentiation or differentiation of a personality that has a strong relationship with social role-taking also plays a significant role in this regard. The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of reality therapy training based on choice theory on social role-taking and self-differentiation of couples.

**research method:** This research is applied in terms of purpose and quasi-experimental method with a pre-test-post-test design with a control group along the follow-up stage. Among all couples referred to counseling centers in districts 2 and 5 of Tehran in 1397, 30 couples who were selected by available sampling were randomly assigned to two experimental groups (15 couples) and control (15 couples). Experimental group 10 sessions of 90 minutes They were intervened. Subjects completed questionnaires of social role taking and differentiation in three stages of pre-test, post-test and follow-up.

**Results:** Analysis of variance with repeated measures was used to evaluate the results. The results showed a significant difference in the level ( $P < 0.01$ ) in the mean (standard deviation) scores of social role-takings of the experimental group in the post-test (2.2) 1.26 and follow-up (2.2) 2.26 as well as self-differentiation in the level ( $P < 0.05$ ) there is 3.36 in the post-test (3/3); But the mean scores of self-differentiations in the follow-up stage (1.2) 8.34 are not significant. The results of repeated measures analysis of variance showed that the scores of social roles taking and self-differentiation after the intervention in the experimental group increased significantly compared to the control group.

**Conclusion:** According to the obtained results, reality therapy training based on choice theory can be used as an appropriate and effective method in couple therapy interventions and in premarital counseling.

**Keywords:** reality therapy, social role taking, personality differentiation, choice theory

**Received:** 24/November/ 2021

**Accepted:** 11/April/ 2022

**Citation:** Pour Seyyed Aghaei Z.S.. The effectiveness of reality therapy training (Choice theory) on Social Role taking and self-differentiation of couples, Family and health, 2022; 12(3): 36-47

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**Introduction:**

Life satisfaction and peace of mind are the most important needs of spouses; Because higher marital satisfaction causes the longevity and strength of the family in society and plays an important role in the psychological health of couples (1). One of the factors that play a big role in creating peace in spouses' social role taking. The term "social role taking", both "role taking" and "perspective taking", means the ability to take another person's cognitive point of view and to infer his or her thoughts and feelings correctly, and to allow one to empathize with the other while maintaining unity. And look at things from his position (2), walk in another person's shoes, see the world through his eyes and behind his glasses, empathize with what he feels, and try to look at the world as he looks, and then think. (3).

Social role taking in the theories of Gelbach (4), Rogers (5), the circumplex model Olson family (6) Beck's cognitive theory (7) and Perner and Lang's theory (8) as a high-level cognitive skill in the category of complex judgment, critical thinking and problem solving It is especially considered in new situations. Oswald (9) divides role taking into two categories: cognitive (recognizing and understanding the thoughts of others) and emotional (recognizing and understanding the feelings of others). The cognitive part requires the identification of attribution errors, crude realism, and affirmation that negatively affect attitudes and expectations and lead to the negative orientation of subjective assumptions about the conflict situation, and the emotional part involves identifying and understanding the feelings of others (10).

Davis and Oathout (11) believe that the ability to social role taking and empathize creates deeper satisfaction in romantic relationships; Thus, couples equipped with this skill maintain a high level of cognitive function in conflict-provoking situations, manage their anger by reducing their arousal, and have more constructive conflict resolution styles and higher adaptability (12).

The studies of Long (13), Le Blanc et al. (14), Bissonnette, Rusbult and Kilpatrick (15) have confirmed the effect of social role-taking in reducing marital conflicts. In order for a couple to be equipped with this important tool, it is necessary to achieve a differentiated personality. Because differentiation is a complex combination of emotional maturity, the ability to think logically in an emotional situation, and the ability to maintain relationships and perceive differences, and this understanding of differences is one of the components of social role-taking and social cognitive skills necessary for successful interactions. (16).

Differentiation as a psychological construct is one of the basic concepts of Bowen's theory (17) and from a theoretical point of view there are at least four factors influencing the level of differentiation and personality: emotional reaction (state in which one's emotions dominate his mind), my position in life (having specific beliefs), Emotional separation (escape from the bond of unresolved family emotions) and integration with others (need for approval and support of others). In other words, differentiated individuals may experience intense emotions, but they are not weakened by these emotions and their reactions are controlled. When internal experiences or interpersonal interactions are highly stressful, they do not feel the need to separate emotionally from others but have a strong identity. In intimate relationships, they are able to maintain their self-definition and do not mingle with

others. Differentiated individuals are inherently leaders, have their own thoughts and feelings, and are not forced to conform to the expectations of others (18). From this point of view, men and women with low levels of differentiation are expected to have less emotional maturity when they get married and have a limited capacity for intimacy and understanding each other's points of view. In contrast, in differentiated marital systems, spouses allow each other to play a more flexible role and a more intimate relationship, tolerating each other's differences of opinion and experiencing less emotional reaction. According to Bowen, all mental and physical illnesses, social problems, and especially marital problems are related to the level of self-differentiation (19).

Unfortunately, divorce statistics, which are the most authoritative indicator of marital turmoil, indicate that role-playing, socialization, and differentiation are not readily available in married life. According to the statistics of the National Registry, in the first five months of 1399, there were 127, 245 marriages, of which 34,457 led to divorce (20).

Because most couples do not spend time learning to have a healthy relationship, they experience significant conflict in the early years of life. Therefore, in order to prevent and provide appropriate solutions to prevent divorce and family conflicts, it is necessary to intervene in this matter. One of the effective interventions is reality therapy training based on choice theory (21). This group of therapists believes that the main problem of most clients is the inability to establish satisfactory or successful relationships when interacting with the people who need them in life. In meeting the needs, they choose non-adaptive dissatisfying behaviors (22). From Glaser's point of view, reducing couples' conflicts and increasing the quality of marital life depends on the fact that the parties under the training of reality therapy approach are aware of their reality and responsibility, explore their positive and destructive behavior, seek change and not others, empathy and Develop intimacy and effective communication and problem-solving skills and accept that everything they do is their choice (23). In fact, choice theory leads couples to self-control instead of other control (24) and its key concept compared to other therapies is the emphasis on maturity and personality differentiation, personal responsibility and understanding of the other world. An internal control psychology that explains why couples make choices that determine the course of their lives (25). The most important strength of the application of reality therapy based on choice theory in the field of couple therapy is as a preventive factor and the emphasis is on strengths instead of weaknesses. According to the researcher, this approach takes precedence over other therapeutic approaches, because Glaser's view in psychological pathology is not a view of the patient, a disease or a defect in behavior, but due to misuse of their abilities and the dysfunctional relationship between couples due to undesirable behavior (26).

Numerous research studies have shown the effectiveness of reality therapy in the field of couple relationships. Dubba (27) in a case study has reported the effectiveness of reality therapy on marital and family conflicts.

Fathollahzadeh et al. (28) examined the effectiveness of marital life enrichment based on choice theory on the quality of marital relations and intimacy of 33 couples living in Isfahan

valley and stated that there is a significant difference between the performance of experimental and control groups. Agha Yousefi et al. (29) investigated the effectiveness of reality therapy based on choice theory on marital conflicts and social welfare. The sample size was 250 women, which showed that the reality therapy approach effectively reduces marital conflict.

Shariatzadeh et al. (30) examined the effectiveness of group choice theory on increasing the differentiation and intimacy of 60 married students of Shahroud Non-Profit University in the experimental and control groups and stated that the experimental group had more changes. Derby (31) in a study entitled the study of the effectiveness of the concepts of choice theory and reality therapy to increase the intimacy of incompatible couples referring to counseling centers in 8 training sessions showed that reality therapy reduces couple incompatibility and their overall intimacy in the post-test and post-test stages.

Considering the importance of social role-taking and differentiation variables in reducing couples' conflicts, and considering the increase in divorce statistics, as well as the claim of Glasser's approach to increase the probability of success in effective couples' relationship, considering the lack of research that independently simultaneously study the variables of social role-taking and personality differentiation, so the aim of this study is to determine the effectiveness of reality therapy based on choice theory on changing social role-taking and self-differentiation of couples in Tehran.

### **Research method:**

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and quasi-experimental method with pre-test-post-test-follow-up plan with control group. The statistical population is all couples who referred to one of the counseling centers in District 2 or 5 of Tehran in 1397 due to marital problems. In addition, couples in the statistical population had other conditions, such as: no acute and critical conflicts or on the verge of divorce, no acute psycho-personality disorder, having at least one year and a maximum of 15 years of cohabitation and having at least a cycle degree. Criteria for leaving the study also included absenteeism for more than two sessions in the training sessions.

To select the sample, first the announcement of the meetings and the conditions of the initial registration were communicated to the clients and consulting colleagues for reference. After enrollment of 50 couples, 30 couples (60 people) who obtained the lowest score in the pre-test were selected through the implementation of questionnaires, socialization and self-differentiation questionnaires and were randomly divided into two groups of 30 people (15 couples) for testing and control. The experimental group received 10 sessions of 90 minutes of reality therapy training and the control group did not receive any intervention. After the sessions, both groups underwent post-test under the same conditions. Also, one month after the post-test phase, the follow-up phase was performed on experimental and control subjects. Research tools:

**Social role taking Questionnaire:** This scale was developed by a researcher (16) and has 15 questions and includes four subscales: "Cognitive prediction of others", "Perception of others' point of view", "Putting oneself in the place of others" and "Respect for differences".

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is also 0.78. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the pre-test stage was 0.86 and the post-test stage was 0.90.

**Personality Differentiation Questionnaire:** This scale was developed by Drake (32) and has 20 questions that measure the four subscales of "emotional reaction", "self-position", "emotional separation" and "integration with others". In Iran, the validity and reliability of the validated Cronbach's differentiation questionnaire was 0.76 (33). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the pre-test stage was 0.76 and the post-test stage was 0.82.

**Reality-based intervention:** Reality therapy training sessions based on choice theory are adapted from Amani research (34) and were conducted in ten sessions. The titles of the meetings are described below:

**Table 1. Content Title of Reality Therapy Sessions (Choice Theory)**

Content	Purpose	session
Introduction, introduction of goals and rules, implementation of pre-test	Emotional communication and initial evaluation	1
Examining the demands of the members, focusing on the current behavior, determining the desired goal of the person.	Identify the current problem	2
Focus on the current behavior, determine the person's desired goal .	Identify actions taken in the context of the problem	3
Assuming the victim of past choices, analyzing the current course of life, expressing the concept of choice theory .	Value judgment about behavior	4
Plan for responsible behavior by emphasizing inner control, regaining control of life based on self-reliance, recognizing the need for love survival, a sense of belonging and power and worth, freedom and fun, and the need to satisfy them effectively.	Recognize the needs and importance of responsible behavior in reality therapy	5
Examine possible alternatives to fill what members want out of their lives, satisfy basic needs based on realistic images, increase sense of responsibility, and make wise decisions rather than emotional ones.	Examine alternatives	6
Develop realistic plans, start simple commitments not to control the other, empathize when the spouse is upset, use techniques such as role-playing, rational discussion and	Design a program to help solve the problem	7

confrontation, change from negative to positive thoughts, verbal shock and meditation and questioning.

Discuss the logical and inevitable consequences of behaviors, creating a commitment to implement realistic plans .	Commitment to clients to advance and follow the program	8
Re-evaluate value judgments for projects that clients have not acted on, encouraging re-commitment	Establish a structure to evaluate the implementation process of the program	9
Final conclusion and implementation of post-test	Final Conclusion	10

### Research findings:

3.33% (10 people) of the experimental group have a diploma, 50% (15 people) have a master's degree, 10% (3 people) have a bachelor's degree and 6.7% (2 people) have a master's degree. But in the control group, 43.4% (13 people) had a diploma, 3.33% (10 people) had a master's degree and 3.23% (7 people) had a bachelor's degree. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of social mapping and differentiation of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test, post-test.

**Table2. Mean and standard deviation of social role-playing and self-differentiation in experimental and control groups**

Variable	Indicator		Follow up			Post-test		
			Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	Average	
group	Number	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	<b>Average</b>	
Experimental	30	2/2	26/2	2/2	26/1	<b>Social role taking</b>	3	<b>23/1</b>
Control	30	3	20	2/8	19/9		2/7	<b>20/2</b>
Experimental	30	2/1	34/8	3/3	36/3	<b>Self-differentiation</b>	7/1	<b>27</b>
Control	30	3/3	34/6	4/2	25/8		6	<b>25/1</b>

Since in this study, pre-test-post-test and follow-up experimental design was used with the control group, it was used to analyze the results and to analyze the results. In this case, repeated measures analysis of variance has assumptions that must be realized in order to be able to use this method. In this study, all the assumptions were established here, one of the assumptions, the default of the covariance alignment. According to Table 3 results, the assumption of the covariance and the assumption of the analysis of the variance-covariance matrix in the self-determination variable is not established. For this reason, the result of the Greenshauser test is adjusted by adjusting the degrees of freedom of reporting to include a variable in the social role-playing variable of this hypothesis.

**Table3. Mokhli sphericity test on equality of covariances in study variables**

Variable	Alpha	Degrees of freedom	$2 \chi$	Mokhli test
<b>Social role taking</b>	0/27	2	19	0/478
<b>Self-differentiation</b>	0/001	2	20/9	0/721

The results in Table 4 show that the value of F obtained at the level of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ) for self-differentiation and at the level of ( $p < 0.001$ ) is significant for social role taking. There are three stages of significant difference, in other words, the application of reality therapy training based on choice theory has been effective in increasing the social role taking and self-differentiation of couples.

**Table 4. Frequent measurement analysis to compare the scores of the three steps in the experimental group**

Variable	Indicator	Eta Squared	F	Average squares	Degrees of freedom	Set of squares
<b>Social role taking</b>	<b>Sphericity</b>	0/56	8/632	25	2	39
	Greenhouse Geezer	0/56	8/632	26/6	1/522	39
	Hayan-Field	0/56	8/632	24/05	1/242	39
	Low limit	0/56	8/632	5/124	1	39
<b>Self-differentiation</b>	<b>Sphericity</b>	0/45	13/11	30/1	2	68/9
	Greenhouse Geezer	0/45	13/11	30/4	1/347	68/9
	Hayan-Field	0/45	13/11	28/2	1/024	68/9
	Low limit	0/45	13/11	10/4	1	68/9

In order to determine which of the different stages of difference is significant, the Bonferroni post hoc test was used, the results of which are listed in Table 5.

**Table 5. The results of Bonferroni post hoc test for the variables of social role-taking and self-differentiation**

Variable	Follow-up - post-test		Follow-up - pre-test		Post-test-pre-test	
	The standard error	difference in averages	The standard error	difference in averages	The standard error	difference in averages
<b>Social role taking</b>	1.4	2/3	1/9	-2/5	2	-3/1
	0/4	1	0/9	-1/2	1	-2/2
<b>Self-differentiation</b>						

According to Table 5, the difference in the mean of post-test and pre-test and follow up in the experimental group with the mean pre-test in the social role taking and Self-differentiation variable is significant, but the difference in the mean follow-up of follow-up in self-differentiation variable is not significant, indicating the lack of effectiveness of the educational program on increasing the difference in differentiation in individuals The test is in the follow-up stage. However, the difference between the mean of follow-up and post-test in the social role-taking variable is significant, which indicates the stability of the effect of the educational program on the rate of increasing role-taking in the group of married couples.

#### **Discussion and conclusion:**

The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of reality therapy training based on choice theory on social role-taking and self-differentiation of couples. The results of Bonferroni's post hoc test showed that there was a significant relationship between the post-test in two variables, but there was no significant relationship between post-test and follow-up stage in the self-determination variable, while showed that there was a significant relationship between post-test with follow-up in the role taking variable There were all stages of the experiment. The findings of this study are in line with the results of Duba et al. (27), Fathollahzadeh (28), Aghayousafi (29), Shariatzadeh (30) and Derbay (31). In explaining the findings, it can be said that in reality therapy emphasizes the cultivation of a sense of responsibility to satisfy the basic needs of oneself and one's spouse and liberation from external control; Therefore, the couples in the study may not have taken into account the needs of themselves and their spouse before the intervention; However, by attending training sessions, they have been able to focus their attention on these important issues and, by increasing their ability to social role-taking, consider these issues in practice and behavior. The theory of choice teaches people the rules of behavior, how to understand the views of others, effective communication and happiness, and by strengthening the sense of responsibility in spouses, helps to achieve mutual understanding of each other's needs and to take responsibility for their spouse's problems and needs. Difficult to empathize with him. Reality therapy, as the psychology of inner control, leads to a correct and scientific understanding of human behavior and improves empathy and mutual understanding of the needs of married life, so it helps the person more than the source of the problem in conflict

situations, his selfishness and unwillingness to solve the problem. Know, be able to understand and respect his needs, and by informing the person from the other side's point of view and providing an opportunity to talk and increase and correct information if necessary and help reduce stereotypes and accept new ways, bring views closer. They reach each other and reach an agreement point to resolve the conflict, and the individual can overcome obstacles such as fundamental document error, crude realism, and confirmation error (35) and thus develop social role-taking in relation to the spouse.

Also, the results of the present study clearly clarified that the theory of choice, which covers the development of human relationships, is also effective in increasing the differentiation of couples. Husbands and wives think that the cause of all the problems in their married life in foreign affairs is rooted in their existence, so they think that they have no choice but to control the problems to eliminate the problems. They control and change their environment as well as their spouse, depriving him or her of his or her freedom and autonomy by constantly controlling and clinging to him or her, unaware that they can only control themselves. In this study, couples learned to take the focus away from their spouse's behavior and focus on themselves, thus improving their identity. On the other hand, people who are not discriminated against become involved in intimate relationships with others and with their spouse, and this leads to the loss of the identity of each spouse, while different people behave rationally and rationally in dealing with life issues and problems. They solve (36). Therefore, reality therapy helped the couples to find strong beliefs in life, to have a strong personal identity, to be able to react to my situation in the face of problems instead of being mixed or other, to be aware of their role in marital conflicts. And make rational decisions in the face of conflict, rather than emotionally reacting or emotionally separated, because of their ability to make moral judgments.

**Limitation:**

In this research, the questionnaires are filled based on self-report, so it is necessary to be careful in interpreting the research results and the etiological documents of the findings. The method of available sampling and the limitation of the research to a sample of couples in Tehran who participated in the research voluntarily, are other limitations of the present study; Therefore, the generalization of research results to other samples of people in the community should be done with caution.

**Acknowledgment:**

The researcher considers it necessary to thank and appreciate all the participants in the research.

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