

Comparing the effectiveness of learning choice theory in the normal way and micro learning on women's marital intimacy

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Abstract

Introduction: Marital relationship, which is the basis of family relationships and the education of future generations, is considered the most important human relationship. The purpose of this research was to compare the effectiveness of learning choice theory in a normal way and in a micro learning way on women's marital intimacy.

Method: The research method was a semi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with a control group and a follow-up period. The statistical population was married women who were referred to Nedaye Daroon Counseling Center in June and July of 2021, from which 45 women were selected by purposive sampling and were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group. Experiment Group 1 received education of choice theory in the normal way in 8 sessions of 60 minutes, and experiment group 2 received micro learning of choice theory in 8 sessions of 15 minutes, and the control group did not receive any intervention until the end of the research. The research tool was the Marital Intimacy Questionnaire of Parents and colleagues (2006). Data analysis was done by analysis of variance with repeated measures and using SPSS software version 23.

Findings: Findings showed that learning choice theory in the normal way and learning wisdom is effective in increasing the marital intimacy of women ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that learning the theory of choice in a normal way and micro learning by changing behavior through choosing useful and constructive behaviors, the right to choose desirable behaviors in a constructive way leads to the improvement of women's marital intimacy.

Keywords: choice theory, marital intimacy, micro learning

Received: 11/ August/ 2023

Accepted: 2/ November/ 2023

Citation: Saeidi SS, Aliakbari M, Rahnamayie M. Comparing the effectiveness of learning choice theory in the normal way and micro learning on women's marital intimacy, Family and health, 2023; 13(2): 148-160

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Introduction:

The family is the first natural and social institution, as a powerful intertwined body, it affects the social, physical, and psychological functions of its members and can be considered to accelerate the psycho-social growth of its members and create personal stability that also protects its structure (1). Intimacy is a dynamic concept in human communication, especially in couple relationships, which means openness and non-inhibition in relationships and the closeness of two or more people in various emotional, logical, and functional dimensions (2). Marital intimacy means closeness, similarity, and intimate relationship with the spouse, joint activities, sexual intercourse, getting to know each other, and emotional behaviors such as caressing and sharing values and ideas, which is an interactive process with recognition, understanding, empathy, it is considered gratitude and acceptance (3). Marital intimacy indicates the quality of the couple's interaction, during which each couple performs appropriate and reciprocal behaviors to maintain comfort and closeness with the beloved one (4). In addition, it seems that people who are afraid of intimacy, due to the lack of internal experiences, including thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which can be caused by a source of anxiety, are neither understood nor understand others (5). Intimacy makes people share important parts of themselves with others. In intimate relationships where there is empathy, honesty, self-disclosure, passion, frankness, and clarity of behavior (6), people in a relationship generally realize the similarities they have with each other, and in addition to the pleasure they get from an intimate relationship They also achieve psychological refinement and experience a sense of solidarity with each other (7), couples usually seek counseling for their marital problems, and increasing and improving intimacy is often one of the goals of couple therapy, and one of the effective therapeutic interventions to promote marital intimacy is learning choice theory (8).

Rapid changes in the world constantly affect private life and the work environment. The need to learn quickly is an important factor in improving the lives of all people. Micro learning is an online educational method based on a performance-oriented educational approach that is short in terms of time (maximum 15 minutes) and aims to provide educational materials from educational videos with rich and fruitful content, summarized texts, illustrative images, and audio content (9). This approach is very useful for learners who do not have much time to put into their learning. Short lessons provide the opportunity for learners to work and learn at the same time with maximum concentration. It is much easier for people to spend a few minutes studying and learning at their workplace than if they plan to study for a full hour and adhere to being present at the appointed time and place (10). In fact, learning segments are an answer in front of burdening learners with additional information. Segments extract information and extract information that is specific and targeted so that the learner can access it at the time of need and use it effectively. It also communicates with those who need to update information without being forced to choose from countless pieces of information (11). Micro learning content should be produced, collected, and modified in a collaborative way with learners. Educational materials can be used as a tool to organize or connect with small content sections to direct the attention of learners to important topics and provide the possibility of learning more about the subject. Educational materials strike a balance between short format and

additional information. To avoid additional information, micro learning materials should be compact and concise but coherent and comprehensible (12).

Looking at different treatment methods, it can be said that an approach that can be used for a wide range of subjects and people is the choice theory (13). Teaching the choice theory invites people to take responsibility (14) and helps them to accept reality and make moral and responsible choices, build their relationships based on quality internal control, and lead their lives toward happiness and prosperity (15), and it emphasizes on choices that people make through their behavior (16). According to the choice theory, every human being has five basic needs, which are: love and a sense of belonging, power, freedom, recreation, and the need for survival (17), and every person can only feel responsible, self-efficacy, self-trust, and being respected when to be able to meet his basic needs effectively and to believe that he is in charge of his life affairs and can provide better conditions for himself (18). Reality therapists believe that people show behaviors that are a way to solve the failure caused by an unpleasant relationship, and therefore, if someone intends to use reality therapy, they must first be familiar with the choice theory (19). In this view, it is believed that those who suffer from feelings of loneliness and worthlessness, deny reality and suffer from unhappiness, depression, anxiety, and lack of responsibility (20). In this regard, the results of the studies of Ghorbanpour and colleagues showed that reality therapy group training is effective on marital instability and marital intimacy in couples (21). Farhadi et al. found that reality therapy based on choice theory leads to an increase in women's marital intimacy (22). In their research, Zarei et al found that group counseling based on choice theory is more effective in increasing marital intimacy in married women compared to group counseling based on Gottman's theory (23). Elyas and Elsayed found that reality therapy improves women's marital adjustment (24). Henderson et al.'s research indicates the effectiveness of reality therapy based on choice theory in increasing the self-control and marital intimacy of people (25).

Knowing the effective factors in improving marital relations and their management is one of the methods worthies of attention in solving problems and increasing marital compatibility and intimacy. So, knowing these factors helps the couple therapist to create, strengthen, or modify them by knowing these factors and achieve marital intimacy. Therefore, the adverse effects of problems and misunderstandings in the lives of couples and children, the need to know and find effective solutions to improve marital intimacy and search for new fields for researching problems and reducing divorce for the use of researchers and family therapists are some of the reasons that it shows the importance and necessity of this research. Also, the present study followed the path of filling the gap between scientific and practical knowledge to apply the results of previous research in a practical format and tried to open the paths of more practical use of the results of scientific studies by integrating their results; Therefore, this research seeks to answer the question of whether there is a difference between learning choice theory in the normal way and micro learning about women's marital intimacy?

Research Method:

The research method was a pretest-posttest semi-experimental type with a control group and a 2-month follow-up period. The statistical population was married women who were referred to

Nedaye Daroon counseling center in June and July of 2021, from which 45 women were selected by purposive sampling and were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group. The criteria for entering the research were informed consent to participate in the research, at least a diploma education, obtaining a score lower than the cut-off point in the marital intimacy questionnaire, and the criteria for exiting were unwillingness to cooperate in the research, and/or absence of more than two sessions. It should be noted that there was no sample loss in the research process.

The research process was such that in June and July of the year 2021, after the necessary coordination with the relevant officials and referring to the counseling center in Tehran and the cooperation of the counselors, the women who came to receive family counseling services were identified and a briefing session was held for them. Then, by stating the objectives and process of the research and explaining that the group counseling sessions are free, the marital intimacy questionnaire was implemented, and the women who received a score lower than the cut-off point and were willing to participate in the research were registered. Screening was done based on the entry and exit criteria, sampling was done, informed consent was obtained from the participating members, and the participants were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group (15 people in each group). In the same meeting, the researchers pledged that after the end of the research, the control group would also receive more effective treatment. Experiment Group 1 received education of choice theory in the normal way in 8 sessions of 60 minutes, Experiment Group 2 received micro learning of choice theory in 8 sessions of 15 minutes by the researcher in the training hall of the counseling center and the control group did not receive any intervention until the end of the study. To analyze the collected data, analysis of variance with repeated measurements and Bonferroni's post hoc test were used by SPSS statistical software version 23. Research tool:

Marital Intimacy Questionnaire: This questionnaire was created by Olya, Fatehizadeh and Bahrami in 2006 and it consists of 85 questions, the scale of which is the Likert scale, and the 9 dimensions of marital intimacy include: (emotional intimacy 11 questions), (intellectual intimacy 8 questions), (physical intimacy 6 questions) (social-recreational intimacy 8 questions), (communicative intimacy 11 questions), (spiritual intimacy 9 questions) (psychological intimacy 9 questions), (sexual intimacy 8 questions) and (general intimacy 15 questions) (26). The statements are graded with a Likert scale from always to never, and the individual's score is obtained by summing the scores of the options. The minimum score in this test is 87 and the maximum score is 348, and the higher the score, the higher the marital intimacy. To simultaneously examine the marital intimacy questionnaire, Thompson and Walker's intimacy scale was used. The results showed that the correlation between the marital intimacy test and the Thompson and Walker scale was 0.92, which is significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.001$, $r = 0.92$). Cronbach's alpha was used to determine its reliability, and Cronbach's alpha for the whole test was calculated as 0.98 (27).

Learning the theory of choice in the normal way: the effective program of learning the theory of choice in the normal way, taken from the training plan of the theory of choice by Farhadi et

al. (22) it was held in 8 sessions of 60 minutes, the summary of the content of the sessions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Choice theory learning protocol

sessions	content outlines
First	Conducting the pre-test, communicating and teaching the concepts of internal and external control psychology (establishing communication and getting to know the participants (introduction), stating the rules of the group and the goals of the course, asking basic questions, familiarizing with the principles of choice theory and explaining the application of internal and external control psychology).
Second	Teaching the qualitative world of goals (knowing the qualitative world and the images inside it and evaluating and measuring the qualitative world).
Third	Teaching the seven destructive habits of marriage (evaluating the desire to control others by the individual, identifying and teaching the seven destructive habits in married life, teaching the role of the seven destructive habits in marital relationships).
Forth	Teaching the seven loving behaviors (teaching the characteristics of friendly relationships and their differences with marital relationships, teaching the seven loving behaviors and achieving desires).
Fifth	Getting to know the five basic needs (teaching the five basic needs, helping people to understand the basic needs).
Sixth	Knowing the basic needs of spouses (evaluating the level of needs between couples, informing couples about each other's needs, evaluating the needs of couples by each other, teaching the difference in needs between couples).
Seventh	Knowledge of the circle of solution (education of the hypothetical circle of solution, formation, and drawing of the hypothetical circle of solution, negotiation, and agreement on how to satisfy the needs).
Eighth	Evaluation of the circle of resolution and taking the post-test (evaluation of the circle of resolution was done, conducting the circle of resolution in the counseling session for volunteers, working on the needs, evaluating people in the field of understanding mutual concepts (needs, choice of behavior, internal and external control, qualitative world), summing up and the final conclusion and presentation of the post-exam.

Content of choice theory by micro learning method: Choice theory by micro learning method online in eight 15-minute sessions by providing educational materials from educational videos,

summarized texts, illustrative images and audio content taken from Farhadi et al.'s choice theory training plan (22) was held, the summary of the content of the meetings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Selection theory protocol by micro learning method

sessions	content outlines
First	Conducting the pre-test and teaching psychological concepts of internal and external control.
Second	Measuring the ideal world.
Third	Presenting an educational video on seven destructive habits of marriage.
Forth	Educational video presentations of seven loving behaviors.
Fifth	Presentation images of training five basic needs.
Sixth	Educational differences of needs in couples.
Seventh	Video presentations of the conflict resolution department.
Eighth	Presentations of audio files of the evaluation of the circle, solving and implementing the post-exam.

Findings:

Demographic findings showed that the average age of the participants in the research was 38.9 and the standard deviation was 2.1. Among the participants in the research, 41/6 had a diploma, 33/5 had a bachelor's degree, and 24/9 had a master's degree. The description of research variables is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Description of research variables by group and test stage

Variable	Time	choice theory in the normal way		choice theory by micro learning method		Control group	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Marital intimacy	Pre-test	144.20	9.33	145.85	9.28	144.15	9.45
	Post-test	157.11	11.41	151.50	10.64	143.72	10.25
	Follow up	158.55	11.76	151.01	10.93	141.98	10.32

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the marital intimacy variable for the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages, after learning the choice theory by normal method and microlearning, the scores of the experimental group had a significant difference. Also, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which shows that the assumption of normality is established, is established for the marital intimacy variable ($p < 0.05$). The results of Leven's test showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance is also valid for the marital intimacy variable ($F = 11.11$) ($p < 0.05$). Box's M test to check the hypothesis of homogeneity of covariance matrix showed that the F value of box's M statistic is equal to 2.42, which is not significant according to the significance level of 0.095 and it indicates the homogeneity of covariance matrix among different groups of dependent variables. The results of multivariate covariance analysis are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Multivariate analysis of variance for marital intimacy variable

variable	Type of effect	Value	F statistics	Hypothesis degree of freedom	Error degree of freedom	P-value	Eta coefficient
Marital intimacy	Pillai's Trace	0.945	315.775	2	37	0.001	0.945

As can be seen in Table 4, the results showed that there is a significant difference in the research variable after removing the pre-test effect, $P < 0.05$ and ($df = 37$ and 2) and ($F = 315.77$ and Pillai's Trace = 0.94). In the following, for a more accurate understanding and to examine the separate effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, the analysis of variance test was used with the repeated intragroup measurement design.

Table 5: The results of analysis of variance with repeated intragroup measurement design to investigate the effectiveness of learning choice theory in the normal way and micro learning on marital intimacy.

Group	Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	P-value
choice theory in the normal way	time	987.17	1	987.17	114.460	0.000
	time*group	973.20	1	973.20	82.119	0.000
	error	62.150	18	3.45		
choice theory by micro learning method	time	611.67	1	611.67	83.94	0.000
	time*group	391.71	1	391.71	102.35	0.000
	error	44.850	18	2.49		

The results of Table 5 showed that the changes in the experimental group over time in the variable of marital intimacy ($p < 0.005$) were significant. Also, the effect size showed that the changes in marital intimacy variables were caused by the interaction of time and group; In the

sense that changes have occurred in time and in groups, these changes have become meaningful together.

Table 6: The results of the Bonferroni adjusted test for the pairwise comparison of average marital intimacy according to learning approaches

experimental group 1	Experimental group 2	Mean differences	Standard error	p-value
choice theory in the normal way	Control group	13.39	1.16	0.001
choice theory by micro learning method	Control group	7.78	0.39	0.001
choice theory in the normal way	choice theory by micro learning method	5.61	0.77	0.008

The results of Table 6 show that learning choice theory in the normal way and learning choice theory in the micro learning method has increased the marital intimacy of women compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$). Also, there is no significant difference between the effectiveness of the two methods ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion and conclusion:

This research was organized with the aim of comparing the effectiveness of learning choice theory in the normal way and micro learning on increasing marital intimacy of women. The results indicated that the method of learning choice theory in the normal way and micro learning is effective in increasing women's marital intimacy, there is no significant difference between the effectiveness of the two methods. This finding is consistent with the results of studies (21, 22, 23, 24 and 25).

In explaining this finding, it can be said that couples who try to control each other's behavior instead of paying attention to each other's needs, create an atmosphere full of negative energy; emanate, with the reduction of intimacy between them, the attractiveness of the marital relationship also decreases over time, and the result could be preparations for behaviors such as extramarital relationship and infidelity are provided for re-experiencing the initial intimacy. By teaching the choice theory to women, it is possible to help reduce the controlling behavior of couples, which can prevent the formation of destructive communication patterns in the relationship of couples. Blaming and glorifying each other's behavior usually takes place when one of the two couples considers himself to be free of problems and the other is the main cause of the marital challenges that have arisen, which creates a pattern of chasing-avoidance and other destructive patterns, causing the couple to distance themselves; While not trying to control the other's behavior and accepting one's responsibility in improving the quality of married life gives each couple an opportunity to see and hear the other party's point of view (25). This non-judgmental being seen and heard provides an opportunity to increase trust and intimacy in the marital relationship. By taking a non-judgmental and non-controlling attitude,

couples can express their true selves, their needs, and desires with each other; In this case, each of them will come to the conclusion that the love and affection that exists in their lives is real and not the result of a false role that they had to play as a result of controlling each other (23). All the same, communication patterns and communication skills are among the important predictors of marital intimacy. By explaining the concept of general behavior, Glaser's choice theory reminds couples that everything that comes from humans is behavior and people choose their own behavior. In fact, the best way to treat marital problems is to change behavior by choosing a useful and constructive manner that can change the relationship and intimacy of couples. Considering that having a realistic view and not having unreasonable expectations is also emphasized in the selection theory; its training creates the quality of relationships and marital satisfaction of couples. Another important point is that marital intimacy happens over time and requires couples to know each other and each other's needs, which is also emphasized in the education of choice theory. In general, choice theory states how to make behavioral choices by trying to balance needs (24). In this research, women learned to pay attention to each other's wishes and needs and to satisfy their needs and their spouse's needs by using loving behaviors. The women were also helped to review and evaluate the deadly behaviors they used so far and to measure their impact on their marital relationships by completing the worksheets related to each stage of the treatment. By using loving behaviors such as effective listening, encouragement, respect, trust, and acceptance, women were able to establish a better relationship with each other, and as a result, they were encouraged to continue these behaviors, which increased marital intimacy (22). When a person realizes that he chooses any behavior by himself, he will realize his right to choose and his power to choose, and he can choose newer and more desirable behaviors in a more constructive way to improve his marital intimacy in the form of more positive and desirable behaviors and interactions. When couples consciously choose new and desirable behaviors and their communication patterns are improved, marriage will come out of monotony, and in fact, marital boredom and lack of diversity will decrease; Because one of the ways to reduce boredom is to do new and collaborative activities and behaviors, etc., that couples expect for each other, which can be included in the same category as the need for fun and entertainment. As a result, the level of intimacy increases with the reduction of couples' boredom, which is a function of their common desirable behaviors (21).

As with other conducted research, this research has some limitations. Considering that the present study was on a sample of women in Tehran, it is better to be cautious in generalizing the findings. Among the other limitations of the research, we can point to the gender aspect, which, due to the unisex nature of the members (women), it was not possible to have the effect of education on both sides of the relationship, which should be paid attention to. According to the results of the research, it is suggested that more research be done on the effectiveness of the choice theory training in order to clarify the effects of this approach in order to increase the generalizability of the findings, and also according to the results of this research, it is suggested that the choice theory is effective on psychological marital intimacy. it would be great if Couples and family counselors could use choice theory training in educational and counseling sessions to restore and enrich marital relationships.

Appreciation

This article is retrieved from the psychology master's thesis of Payame Noor University, South Tehran Branch. We would like to express our gratitude to all the participants who cooperated in this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors of the article had no conflict of interest in reporting the findings of this research.

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