

**EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS
TRAINING ON MARITAL SATISFACTION AND MENTAL HEALTH
AMONG IRANIAN COUPLES**

By

MAHIN ASKARI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2011

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the members of my family, who supported and encouraged me, especially my mother.

Also, my deepest appreciation goes to my dear husband for his love and moral support and to my children Behnam and Peyman for their patience and understanding during the course of my study.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
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Chairman: Associate Professor Sidek b Mohd Noah, PhD

Faculty: Educational Studies

This study examined the effects of communication and conflict resolution skills training on marital satisfaction and mental health among Iranian couples based on the PREPARE/ENRICH program. In this study, there were two scales used to assess marital satisfaction and mental health: the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The study adopted a pre- and post-control group design in emphasizing the effects of communication training and conflict resolution skills on marital satisfaction and mental health. The participants in this research consisted of couples who were referred to the researcher by counseling center. The referrals were done for about two months in 2009. Their problems were marital difficulty and marital conflict, commonly categorized as marital dissatisfaction, which were identified after formal interview, testing and screening process. In order to assign the experimental and control groups, purposive sampling with random assignment was employed. One hundred and eight participants

comprised of 54 married couples were divided equally between control and treatment groups and the training sessions lasted for eight weeks. In this training program, researchers focused on the dependent variables of marital satisfaction and mental health, while communication and conflict resolution skills training were the independent variables. Specifically, the t-test statistical analysis was employed to test for potential significant differences in couples' scores of marital satisfaction and mental health between (i) the pre- and post-training scores for couples of the experimental group; and (ii) between the post-training scores of couples of the two different groups. The results indicated that training on communication and conflict resolution skills had significant positive effects on the marital satisfaction and mental health scores of the studied couples. In addition, this training program was effective in enhancing the couples' communication skills and capabilities to resolve conflicts. On top of that, this program also affected their mental health sub-scales such as somatic symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction, and depression. This study showed that the training investigated is relevant and useful for counseling procedures. The program presented can be regarded as an aid for family counselors in clinical and non-clinical therapy. Exclusively, the ENRICH psycho-educational program is efficient and well enough to be conducted systematically for Iranian couples. Hence, more marital counselors are recommended to be trained in applying the ENRICH program in their counseling practice.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN LATIHAN KOMUNIKASI DAN KEMAHIRAN PENYELESAIAN
KONFLIK TERHADAP KEPUASAN PERKAHWINAN DAN KESIHATAN
MENTAL DALAM KALANGAN PASANGAN IRAN**

Oleh

MAHIN ASKARI

Februari 2011

Pengerusi: Prof. Madya Sidek b Mohd Noah, PhD

Fakulti: Pengajian Pendidikan

Kajian ini menguji kesan latihan komunikasi dan kemahiran penyelesaian konflik terhadap kepuasan perkahwinan dan kesihatan mental di dalam kalangan pasangan Iran berdasarkan program PREPARE/ENRICH. Dalam kajian ini, terdapat dua alat ukuran yang digunakan untuk mengukur kepuasan perkahwinan dan kesihatan mental: Skala Kepuasan Perkahwinan ENRICH dan the *General Health Questionnaire* (GHQ-28). Rekabentuk kajian ini merupakan rekabentuk kajian eksperimen kumpulan rawak, ujian pra dan ujian pasca dengan menekankan kesan-kesan latihan komunikasi dan kemahiran penyelesaian konflik terhadap kepuasan perkahwinan dan kesihatan mental. Responden- responden kajian ini adalah terdiri daripada semua pasangan yang telah dirujuk kepada pengkaji melalui pusat-pusat kaunseling. Rujukan telah dibuat selama dua bulan pada tahun 2009. Antara masalah-masalah yang dirujuk adalah kesukaran yang timbul di dalam perkahwinan dan konflik perkahwinan yang dikategorikan sebagai ketidakpuasan dalam

perkahwinan di mana semua pasangan ini telah dikenalpasti melalui temubual formal, pengujian, dan proses penapisan. Teknik persampelan bertujuan dengan kaedah pembahagian rawak telah digunakan untuk membentuk kumpulan eksperimental dan kawalan. Kajian ini dilaksanakan ke atas seratus lapan orang responden di mana 54 pasangan suami isteri dibahagi sama rata di antara kumpulan eksperimen dan kawalan, dan sesi-sesi latihan berlangsung selama lapan minggu.

Di dalam program latihan ini, pengkaji telah memfokuskan ke atas pembolehubah bersandar iaitu kepuasan perkahwinan dan kesihatan mental, manakala latihan kemahiran komunikasi dan resolusi konflik bagi pembolehubah tak bersandar. Secara khususnya, analisis statistik ujian-t telah digunakan untuk menguji perbezaan yang signifikan bagi data kepuasan perkahwinan dan kesihatan mental di antara (i) ujian pra dan pasca dalam kumpulan eksperimental; dan (ii) antara ujian pasca bagi pasangan-pasangan dalam dua buah kumpulan yang berbeza. Dapatan-dapatan kajian menunjukkan latihan ke atas komunikasi dan kemahiran resolusi konflik mempunyai kesan signifikan yang positif ke atas kepuasan perkahwinan dan kesihatan mental pasangan suami-isteri. Tambahan, program latihan ini sangat berkesan dalam meningkatkan komunikasi dan kemahiran penyelesaian konflik di antara pasangan. Program ini juga telah memberi kesan yang positif ke atas sub-skala kesihatan mental pasangan seperti simptom somatik, kebingungan, ketidakfungsian sosial, dan kemurungan. Kajian ini telah menunjukkan latihan yang dikaji adalah sangat relevan dan berguna untuk prosedur-prosedur kaunseling. Program yang ditunjukkan boleh digunakan sebagai alat bantuan untuk kaunselor keluarga di dalam terapi klinikal dan bukan klinikal. Terutamanya, program pendidikan psiko ENRICH ini sangat efisien untuk dijalankan secara sistematik untuk pasangan-pasangan Iran. Oleh itu adalah

dicadangkan agar para kaunselor perkahwinan diberi latihan dalam mengaplikasikan program ENRICH ini di dalam praktis kaunseling.