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# Examining the Improving Strategies for Iranian Couple Communication Patterns: A Scoping Review

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type:	Background and Objective: As proper communication is the key to a strong family and
<b>Review Article</b>	the couples must follow effective communication patterns in these relationships to strengthen the
	family foundation, improving these relationships has been very effective. The purpose of this
Received:	study was to review the strategies for enhancing the couple communication patterns.
	Methods: In this scoping review, the SID, Barkat, PubMed, Cochrane, Scopus, Web of
4 January 2021	Science, Uptodate, Magiran, and Psych INFO databases were searched for interventional studies
Revised:	from 19 <sup>v</sup> <sup>*</sup> to 2019 on Iranian couples. At the end of the search, 131 papers were obtained, and
23 February 2021	finally, 19 papers were included in the scoping review.
Accepted:	Findings: The classification was based on educational and therapeutic strategies. The
13 March 2021	educational strategies included training communication skills and training life skills and the
	therapeutic strategies included couple therapy, narrative therapy, and family therapy.
	<b>Conclusion:</b> According to the results, it seems that to improve couple communication patterns,
	both life and communication skills are needed for all couples. Communication and life skills
	training can be more convenient and less costly than the rest. Each of Treatment methods need
	more specialized courses and one cannot reach useful results by some brief sessions, but training
	can be provided to couples even through the book.
	Keywords: Health Promotion, Strategy, Couple communication patterns, Life Skills,
	Education, Communication Skills.

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### Introduction

The couples' relationship is among the most complex human relationships, and none of the human relations has wide and diverse aspects like that of the couples. Human communications cover one aspect of life; however, couples' relationships simultaneously have all the aspects of life, such as biological, economic, emotional, and psychosocial aspects. Overall, the marriage needs to establish an effective and efficient communication (1). The communication enables the husband and wife to discuss, exchange ideas, and beware of each other's needs. Couples' relationships actually happen to satisfy all levels of needs; thus, the most common problem of the dissatisfied couples is the failure to establish communication (2). When family members use effective communication patterns, they have a clear understanding of the transfer, content, and the intention of every message, they meet the psychological needs of each other and continue to communicate and participate in the community (3).

Communication channels are seen so often in a family and are called communication patterns, and the set of these patterns forms the family communication network (4). The communicative patterns are highly important and are reported as the cornerstone of the general well-being of the family. Thus, disturbing communication patterns have a significant effect on the mental health of couples (5). Awareness of the couples of various types of communication patterns can help satisfy their marital life (6). Currently, several theoretical perspectives try to determine and resolve marital conflicts with different approaches. As proper communication is the key to a strong family, and the couples must follow effective communication patterns in these relationships to strengthen the family foundation, and improving these relationships has been very effective. As no Iranian study was found to examine the different strategies, by which couples' communication patterns were promoted, the purpose of this study was to review the strategies for improving communication patterns among couples.

### Methods

In this scoping review, loyalty in translating texts, avoiding plagiarism, and respect for intellectual property or copyright, were observed. The study was conducted in five following stages: designing a research question, searching and extracting research-related studies, selecting relevant studies, summarizing information and data, and reporting its results.

### Designing a research question

What are the strategies for improving couples' communication patterns?

### Search strategy:

For this scoping review, data were collected using the SID, Barakat, PubMed, Cochrane, Scopus, Web of Science, Uptodate, Magiran, and PsycInfo databases from 1976 to 2019. The keywords were health promotion, strategy, couple communication patterns, life skills, education, and communication skills. The inclusion criterion was all interventional studies conducted in Iran reporting the methods to improve couples' communication patterns and the exclusion criteria were studies that were not conducted in Iran and those that their full texts were not available.

#### Extracting articles according to the inclusion criteria

In this review, initially, a list of titles and abstracts of all the papers was developed by two researchers and designed to determine and select relevant topics. Then, the relevant papers entered the research process independently. In the end, 131 papers were obtained, and finally, 19 papers were included in the scoping review (Figure 1).

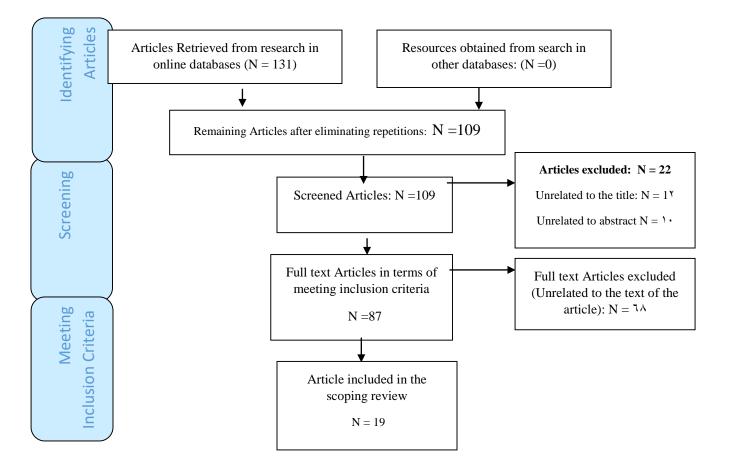


Figure 1: Flowchart of articles enrolled in the study

### Results

A review of the studies showed that strategies to promote couples' communication patterns included educational and therapeutic strategies. The educational strategies included training communication skills and training life skills, and the therapeutic strategies included couple therapy, narrative therapy, and family therapy.

**Educational Strategy:** the educational strategies were training communication skills and life skills. Table 1 indicates the characteristics of the studies on strategies to improve couple communication patterns.

**Teaching life and communication skills:** In this review, six studies had used and reported this strategy (7-12). Communication skills are the skills, through which individuals can engage in the interpersonal interactions and processes - the process where the individuals divide information, thoughts, and feelings through verbal and non-verbal communication (7, 10, 13). These skills are the following sub-skills that shape the base of communication skills:

**Understanding verbal and nonverbal messages:** It is the ability to receive and send clear communication messages known as message comprehension skills. As the understanding of the couple mutual messages increases, misunderstandings are reduced. The correct interpretation of each other's words can reduce the speed of the spontaneous response to the spouse and increase the communication quality of the spouse (14).

**Organizing emotions:** The opposing side needs to control the emotion or excitement of the other party in most cases. Sometimes, it is necessary to express emotions and sometimes, controlling them increases marital satisfaction. Controlling emotions and feelings is effective in improving couples' communication and can prevent other resulted problems (14).

**Listening:** Listening is the learned and complex process of sensing, interpreting, evaluating, storing, and answering oral messages. Effective listening is an activity that assists the speaker to transfer his meaning and eliminates the defensive state of the speaker. When couples listen to each other's words and hints, it creates conditions for respect for their interests and also can have a positive effect on establishing true couples' relationships (14).

**Insight towards the communication process:** The ability to understand how to affect social relationships and others is another communication skill. The proper understanding of establishing the right relationship in the right conditions throughout life can be very effective in improving couples' communication (14).

**Decisiveness in communication:** this skill refers to the courage to the extent that one can express questions and ambiguities regardless of the emotional response of others (14). These skills are so important and their failure can be accompanied by feelings of loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, and lack of academic and professional success (10, 13). This psychological-training method reduced anxiety, increased adaptability, increased satisfaction, and marital intimacy (11, 15).

Therapeutic approaches: In this review, 13 studies had used and reported this strategy (16-28).

**Couples therapy:** Couples therapy is a method to solve problems and conflicts that a couple alone cannot effectively manage (17).

**Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy:** It is the combination of behavioral and cognitive factors in the treatment of couples with marital problems, which can start with functional evaluation of coupled problems and dependent behaviors that support it. In this type of therapy, initiation of thoughts is not emphasized, but when it stresses the behavior, the main purpose of the intervention is targeting behaviors. In this type of psychotherapy, behavioral therapies, such as behavioral changes, teaching how

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communication training and problem-solving education are used, and the interactive recognition of couples are emphasized. Using cognitive-behavioral couple therapy principles, couples can prevent unnecessary judgments and eliminate distorted images. Moreover, the couple can break the misunderstandings circle that leads to frustration and disappointment in their marital lives with more accurate and logical consequences (18, 19, 29).

**Emotion-focused couple therapy:** Given the major role of emotions in attachment theory, this treatment stresses the significant role of emotions and emotional connections in organizing communication patterns and considers emotions a factor to change. Hence, the problems of these couples are not simply due to the lack of communication skills, but due to the resolution of their initial experiences of attachment (16, 30). Thus, the purpose of this approach is to help couples identify and express the needs and the main concerns of each other's attachment. Thus, the couples' attachment insecurities reduce, and a secure attachment is developed between them (18, 20, 31).

**Solution-oriented approach:** This approach is one of the most popular approaches, which is characterized by emphasizing on non-pathologic attitudes toward people, the limitation of therapeutic sessions, the practical nature, and using techniques easy to learn (22, 32). The origins of this approach are followed by a short-term therapeutic model by several psycho-dynamic theorists, such as Siffenos, Mahan, and Duanlo. This approach avoids focusing on problems and exclusively stresses the solutions. The therapy approach states that clients have the necessary merits and creativity they need to make changes themselves. This approach puts great stress on the customer's resources. In this approach, the emphasis is on the view, by which people can find solutions to enhance their lives, but they have lost the ability to find such capabilities (22, 33).

**Integrative couple therapy:** Integrative couple therapy is based on cognitive-behavioral theory, forgiveness theory in interpersonal relationships, insight theory, and damage-response theory to assist couples who face divorce (16, 34). According to this integrative therapy, betrayal is defined as a negative and harmful incident that undermines the basic beliefs of the spouses about their relationship, their spouse, and themselves (16, 19, 35).

**Narrative therapy:** Narrative therapy is an approach that considers the formation of problems because of the difficult narratives of individuals, in which narration and story are used (25). Couple narrative therapy believes that people define their lives and experiences through traditions. The presence of narratives along with problems can cause more problems, and psychological changes and problem-solving are possible through changing the narratives. The narrative couple therapy tries to find narratives that shape the relationship between couples. Moreover, it tries to ease the process of participatory rewriting of their problematic narratives (23, 36).

**Transactional analysis:** The greatest ability of the transactional analysis is providing models for both intrapsychic and interpersonal behaviors, a fact largely related to its roots in thinking of the subject relations (37). At the center of this is the issue of living conditions, which is central to the conceptualization of the intrapsychic of both itself and interpersonal processes (22, 38).

**Family Therapy:** The main idea of family therapy is that a person's illness symptoms will be more recognizable when assessed in the context of family interactive patterns. Structural family therapy requires changes to the organization or structure of the family before treatment and relieving the symptoms. Family structure is an invisible set of special roles, through which family members are related to each other. In this approach, the emphasis is on the family as a whole and the interactions between its subsystems. The

most important criterion for the healthy functioning of subsystems is clear boundaries based on the roles, rules, and power (26, 28). The process of family therapy reveals recurring and predictable communication patterns and how these patterns influence the case's behavior. One of the basic assumptions of the structural family therapy is that couples' problems indicate problems in the family interaction patterns; thus, in the treatment of couples' problems, a particular emphasis is placed on changing the patterns of interaction (27, 28).

# Table 1: Characteristics of studies about Improving Strategies for Couple

# **Communication Patterns**

Type of	Author/	Title	Study type	participants	Sampling method	1- Type of	Results
strategy	Year					intervention	
						2-Duration of	
						intervention	
						3-follow-up	
Education of	Deylami et	Improving the	Interventional	72 couples	Screening method	1 : Guttmann's	Guttmann's educational
communication	al/ 2017	communication		1: 36 couples		therapeutic -	therapeutic intervention
skills and life	(7)	patterns of Iranian		2: 36 couples		training	increases the couple's
skills		couples through		3: -(32.5 years)		intervention.	constructive communication
		Guttmann's		4: -		2: 8 sessions.	patterns and reduces the
		educational				3: 1 year after	demand/ withdrawal
		therapeutic				training.	couple's communication
		intervention					patterns.
	Kimiaee et	The effectiveness of	Interventional	57 couples	Random	1: PAIRS	The results showed that
	al./2015	marital counseling		1: 28 couples		intervention.	(couple) approach has a
	(8)	based on the practical		2: 29 couples		2: 10 sessions.	positive effect on improving
		application pattern of		3: -		3: post-test just	the family function of the
		sincere		4: -		after the training	couples and improving
		communication skills					communication patterns
		on improving family					between them.
		performance in					
		incompatible couples					
	Amini	Comparison of the	Interventional	45 couples	Random	1: life skills	The results showed that
	khooee et	effectiveness of two		1: -		training and imago	both methods of life skills
	al/2014 (9)	life skills education		2: 45 couples in		therapy	education and amateur
		and immunotherapy		2 groups		2: 10 sessions	therapy were effective in
		approaches in the improvement of		3: - 4: -		(once a week) ( a	improving the younger Couple Communication
		young CCPs in		4:-		group for life skills training and	Patterns. Comparing the two
		Bushehr				a group for imago	methods; life skills training
		Bushelli				therapy )	had a better effect on
						3: post-test	Couple Communication
						5. post test	Patterns improvement.
	Abbasi et al/	The effectiveness of	Interventional	20 couples	random	1: training	According to the results of
	2014 (10)	group training the	inci ventolitti	1: 10 couples	Tandom	intimacy	the study, group learning of
	2011 (10)	practical application		2: 10 couples		communication	the couples program can be
		of sincere		3:the		skills	effective in modifying
		communication skills		experimental		2: eight 90-minute	communication patterns.
		on communication		group was 27		sessions	F
		patterns couples on		and 26.2 and		3: pre-test and	
		the verge of marriage		the control		post-test just after	
				group was 23.7		the intervention	
				and 23.8			
				4: -			
	Gholamzadeh	The effectiveness of	Interventional	30 couples	Convenient	1: training	The results of the
	et al/ 2009	communication skills		1: 15 couples		communication	comparison of the scores of
	(11)	training on affective		2: 15 couples		skills	the subjects with the family
	(11)	daming on another		2. 15 coupies		581115	the subjects with the fall

		companionship and		3: 20 to 30		2: seven 90-	test in this study showed
		couples' relationships		years		minute sessions	that communication skills
				4: -		(once a week)	training increase the
						3: post-test just	association and emotional
						after the training	coordination in the
							experimental group.
	Khojaste	The effect of	Interventional	48 couples	Random	1: training	The results showed that
	Mehr et al/	communication skills		1: 24 couples		communication	communication skills
	2008 (12)	training on		2: 24 couples		skills	training increases the
		communication		3: -		2: not mentioned	positive sensitivity of the
		patterns and positive		4:-		3: post-test	spouse, improves the
		emotions on spouses					constructive mutual model
		in couples in Ahvaz					and reduces the expectation
							/ withdrawal
							communication pattern and
							the mutual avoidance
							communication model.
Couples	Aryanfar et	Comparison of the	Quasi-experiment	24 couples	Convenient	1: emotion-	The results show that
therapy and its	al∕ 2016	effectiveness of		1: 8 couples		focused	unified therapy couples and
types	(16)	integrated therapy		2: 16 couples		integrative couple	excitement therapy couples
		and thriller circuit		3: -		therapy	can affect marital intimacy.
		therapy on couples		4: -		2: eight 1-hour	In addition, in terms of
		intimacy couples				sessions (once a	emotional and
		affected by spouse's				week)	communicative effects, the
		betrayal				3: post-test just	effects of therapeutic
						after the training	excitement therapy couples
						-	are more than integrated
							therapy couples.
	Behradfar et	Comparative Study	Interventional	18 couples	Random	1: training	The results of this study
	al/ 2016	of the effectiveness		1: -		emotion-focused	showed that in the post-test,
	(17)	of emotional-couple		2: 9 couples in		integrative couple	narrative therapeutic
		therapy and couples		Narrative		therapy and	couples approach resulted in
		narrative therapy on		Couple		narrative couple	significant improvement in
		marital quality and		Therapy and 9		therapy.	marital quality and
		emotional, cognitive		couples in		2: 8-12 ninety-	1 5
							behavioral disturbances and
		and behavioral		-		-	behavioral disturbances and emotional-focused couple
		and behavioral functions of		Emotionally-		minute sessions.	emotional-focused couple
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused		minute sessions. 3: post-test and	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital
				Emotionally- Focused Couple		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy		minute sessions. 3: post-test and	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment.
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly
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		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage.
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage. There was a significant
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage. There was a significant difference between the two
		functions of		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage. There was a significant difference between the two groups in the post-test and
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		functions of distressed coupled		Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: - 4: -		minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after training	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage. There was a significant difference between the two groups in the post-test and follow up phases of the emotional-focused couple therapy group, but there was no significant difference between the two groups in this regard.
	Shahadat	functions of distressed coupled	Interventional	Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: - 4: -	random	<ul> <li>minute sessions.</li> <li>3: post-test and three months after training</li> <li>1: cognitive-</li> </ul>	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage. There was a significant difference between the two groups in the post-test and follow up phases of the emotional-focused couple therapy group, but there was no significant difference between the two groups in this regard.
	Shahadat Maleki et al/	functions of distressed coupled	Interventional	Emotionally- Focused Couple Therapy 3: - 4: -	random	minute sessions. 3: post-test and three months after training	emotional-focused couple therapy improved marital quality, emotional and cognitive impairment. Significant effect of couple narrative therapy in the follow-up phase was not significant, but recovery in the emotion-focused couple therapeutic group was still significantly (except for avoidance attachment), and this approach significantly improved the behavioral abnormalities of this stage. There was a significant difference between the two groups in the post-test and follow up phases of the emotional-focused couple therapy group, but there was no significant difference between the two groups in this regard.

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Namale all operation and coupled behavious and coupled behavious and matrix auxies on another and coupled behavious another an		2013	efficacy of treatment		1: 16 couples	sampling	and behavioral	on the theoretical
Number         Solution to be appropriate analysis of a participant and a set of the analysis of a participant analysis and a participant analysis of a participant analysis and a participant analysis of a participant analysis and a partanga partanganalysis of a partangananalysis of a participant an		(19)	based on acceptance		2: 16 couples		therapy training.	foundations of therapeutic
Number         Selegits of the effectiveness of solution is solution in the effectiveness of solution in the effectiveness of solution is solution in the effectiveness of solution in the effectivenese in the effectiveness of solution in the effectiveness o			and commitment and		3: 19 to 25		2: 10 sessions,	efficacy, suggested that
Namatical and service with generalized substrive biorder         Netwice with generalized biorder			coupled behavioral		years		twice a week, 75	adherence-based behavioral
Numair of complex length         Interfact distriction in working working interfacts and style interfac			therapy couples on		4: -		minutes each time	therapy was preferred in
Name         weeke			marital anxiety and				3: post-test and 3	terms of the size of change,
Number         generalized anskey dioxed         persent         Parents         A couples with control parents         Simple random         I.: experimental intervortion adoptation of the couples reterming to the option reterming on murical adoptation of the couples reterming to family advice centers         Parents         Portest         A couples the couples reterming to the couples reterming to the option reterming to th			marital adjustment in				months after	overall, and stability on
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		among clients					
		applying for divorce					
Family therapy	Shirzadi et al/	Comparison of the	Quasi-experiment	48 couples	Convenient	1: Bowen family	The results of this study
	2018	efficacy of Bowen		1: 24 couples		therapy for	showed that Bowen and
	(26)	and Minuchin Family		2: 24 couples		training the first	Minuchin's emotional
		Therapy on reducing		3: 31 to 32		group and	family therapy can be used
		emotional divorce		years		Minuchin family	to reduce emotional divorce
		and improving the		4: -		therapy for the	and improve the quality of
		quality of life of				second group	life of couples.
		couples referring to				2: eight 90-minute	
		health homes				sessions	
						3: post-test and	
						three months after	
						training	
	Asadi et al/	Examining the effect	Quasi-experiment	16 couples	random	1 : Satir short term	The results show no
	2010	of short term family	-	1: 8 couples		family therapy	significant difference
	(27)	therapy on the		2: 8 couples		2: 6 group	between the experimental
		relationship patterns		3: -		consulting	group and the control group
		of couples		4: -		sessions by Satir	in the mutual constructive
		*				short term family	communication patterns and
						therapy	mutual avoidance in the
						3: post-test and 45	post-mortem and follow-up
						days after training	stages. However, there were
							no significant differences in
							the relationship between
							expectancy and expected
							male / female resignation
							between the experimental
							and control group at post-
							mortem and follow-up
							stages.
	Nazari et al/	The effect of short	Quasi-experiment	12 couples	random	1: Satir short term	The results showed that
	2009	term family therapy	I	1: 6 couples		family therapy	systematic transient
	(28)	on the intimacy of		2: 6 couples		2: 6 group	treatment can affect the
	· ·/	couples		3: -		consulting	enhancement of couple's
		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		4: -		sessions	intimacy, so this
						3: post-test and 45	information can be used to
						days after training	increase and decrease
						aayo unor training	couples' intimacy and
							enhance communicate.
							ennance communicate.

### Discussion

Couples' communication programs (CCPs)-enhancing strategies include educational and therapeutic approaches. The educational strategies included training communication skills and training life skills, and the therapeutic strategies included couple therapy, narrative therapy, and family therapy. In this section, the interpretation of these strategies is examined.

### Life and communication skills training

Miller founded the CCP in the late 1960s for family studies (39). This training program was designed to strengthen couples' relationships and can increase the level of marital life balance leading to an increase in the long-term family members' psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Speaking skills, effective

listening skills, conflict resolution skills, and interpersonal relationships are the skills that are taught in this program (40). Training of the couples' relationship programs is effective to establish and maintain an open and healthy relationship, as well as to assist couples in explaining and defining their needs and desires, and obtain the ability to pay attention to others and inviting them to clarify their issues (41). The role of communication and its quality and effect has been confirmed by various studies (42). Improving and enhancing communications, problem-solving, self-disclosure, empathic responding skills, and sexual education and counseling through cognitive-behavioral techniques based on religion and culture in each community can be an effective step to enhance and strengthen family bonds, stability, intimacy, and marital satisfaction (43). Also, learning skills increased satisfaction, increased open communication, improved problem-solving skills, and increased empathy (44).

#### **Couple Therapy**

Couple therapy is an approach to solve problems and conflicts that a couple cannot manage and solve effectively. The purpose of couple therapy is to assist each couple to understand themselves better and their partners to decide how to change or continue to deal with the problem. In a study, the number of treatment sessions in couple therapy plus family therapy was significantly lower than couple therapy alone and couple therapy was more effective. According to the results of this study, it is recommended that all family members should be considered in couple therapy to reduce marital conflicts (45). Cognitivebehavioral therapy of couples increases marital adjustment of them. Using appropriate therapeutic methods, like cognitive-behavioral couple therapy, is effective in increasing compatibility between couples (29). Solution-focused (brief) therapy (SFBT) was developed by deShazer (46). According to this approach, using the principles of the solution-focused perspective and adopting a strong strategy against early divorce, one can overcome many marital problems (47). The therapist tries to look at the problem from the client's view to change the behavior with the same perception. However, despite the convergence of the solution-focused model with the explicit and scientific approach of strategic approaches, therapists emphasize collaborative efforts (between therapists and the clients) in building solution-focused narratives (48). Due to the increase in the divorce rate in the past two decades in Iran, solution-focused treatment can increase marital adjustment and prevent divorce by helping couples develop effective solutions and find exceptions in life (49). There are various approaches to educate and modify communication patterns, such as the emotion-focused couple therapy. In this model, it is assumed that the psychological and interpersonal status of the couples in their interactions is organized through the individual emotional experiences of each couple. The base of emotion-focused therapy is self-development and its purpose is to make a balance between treatment and self-development. In other words, training emotional management strategies can improve CCPs (50).

### Narrative therapy

In narrative therapy, people's problems are considered as issues resulting from the painful stories in their minds related to past events. In this therapy, the therapist examines how the life story of the individuals is analyzed by them and the main focus is on creating a new meaning in life (51). Life can be found in different ways from a new perspective. Rewriting life is the ultimate goal of the narrative therapy process, and life will be changed following the revision (52). Studies have shown that when the narratives of life are used as a way to understand couples' intimacy better, they increase individual potentials for developing intimate relationships. When one of the couples know the other, the story of the other increases the chance of further investing in intimate relationships with the other party. Expressing the story of couples' life can be a way for clinicians to improve their relationships (53). Encouraging couples to write their stories can

inform them about the dominant culture of their stories and prepare couples to select, maintain, or change the meaning of their marital narrative. Also, understanding the language of the other party could help couples enhance marital relationships. Couples capable of expressing and coping with inefficient events of the past life, are more comfortable with the current life events. For instance, people who had a sense of security and trust in the past and pre-marital life had the same expectations in their current lives and reported marital satisfaction in their intimate relationships (54).

#### **Transactional analysis**

Relationship analysis is primarily used in marital relationships and social bonds. In these situations, relationship analysis can provide useful and compelling predictions and reviews. In relationship analysis, more attention is paid to human relationships, and it is believed that if people have a healthy, positive, and satisfying relationship with one another and replace it with destructive and negative relationships, they will be able to cope with their and others' psychological pressures and increase life enjoyment. Transactional analysis is one of the most effective psychological theories to solve problems in human relationships with the growing trend of happiness in people (55). Transactional analysis of communication skills can be used to increase intimacy and improve the marital relationship of women (56).

### **Family Therapy**

Family plays a very important role among the factors affecting the mental health of humans. The root of many of the psychological and behavioral abnormalities of humans lies in the family. However, many human signs of progress are due to the family (57). Solidarity and flexibility are two aspects of marital and family behavior as the base of understanding family and marital processes (58). According to the studies on family, family therapy is one of the methods to increase the flexibility of the family. Among family therapy approaches, the approach developed by Stair, as a successful family therapist, has had a great effect on families. Stair stresses the change instead of personality traits in the family patterns (57). He argues that in the family and reports disruptive and ineffective communication as the main cause of family problems (59). Thus, in the process of treatment, Stair tries to help the family members to strengthen their self-esteem to make constructive decisions to be responsible; therefore, they can coordinate their behaviors to be able to communicate on a balanced and equitable base of communication (60-62).

### Conclusion

Based on the results of studies, it can be concluded that communication and life skills are easier and less expensive therapeutic methods. Training such skills also can make couples enable learning how to deal with each other effectively and manage their conflicts; thus, they need less therapeutic approaches, such as couple therapy since these treatments are costly and time-consuming because they are presented through several sessions.

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