

Original Article

The Effectiveness of Teaching Intervention Internal Locus of Control on Increasing Marital Adjustment and Satisfaction

*Askari Asghari-Ganji¹ Shokouh Navabinejad² Kamo Vardanyan³

1- Department of Psychology, School of Psychology, Farhangian University, Babol, Iran

2- Department of Psychology, School of Psychology, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran

3- Department of Psychology, School of Psychology, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia

*asghariganji@yahoo.com

(Received: 28 Aug 2014; Revised: 2 Nov 2014; Accepted: 9 Feb 2015)

Abstract

Background and purpose: Satisfaction with marital life is the most important issue in the joint life, which has the greatest effect on durability and failure of couple's lives. Based on this, the main goal of the present research is to study the effectiveness of teaching intervention based on internal locus of control in increasing marital adjustment and satisfaction has been investigated.

Materials and Methods: The research design was pre- and post-test with control group. Statistical population of this research includes 100 married students of Farhangian University of Babol, Iran. To determine the sample, initially 100 questionnaires of Rotter's locus of control and Spanier's marital adjustment were distributed among the married students. Among this population, 42 couples both had external locus of control and suffered marital maladjustment, 20 couples were selected by simple randomized method and were placed into two experimental and control groups, such that 10 couples were placed in the experimental group and 10 couples were placed in control group. Data were analyzed using the independent t-test method.

Results: Research results showed that, since effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control on increasing marital attachment of couples was calculated t-value ($t = 6.04$) and ($t = 4.71$) for women and men, respectively with degree of freedom of 19 is bigger than t-value in the table ($t = 2.53$); therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and with confidence degree of 99%.

Conclusion: Teaching intervention based on internal control can be used as one of the intervention models for couples who suffer from marital dissatisfaction and think of divorce.

[*Asghari-Ganji A, Navabinejad Sh, Vardanyan K. **The Effectiveness of Teaching Intervention Internal Locus of Control on Increasing Marital Adjustment and Satisfaction. *IJHS* 2015; 3(1): 60-68** <http://jhs.mazums.ac.ir>

Key words: Internal locus of control, Marital adjustment, Marital satisfaction

1. Introduction

One of the very important aspects of a marital system is the satisfaction which the couples experience it in the marriage (1). Bird and Melville suggest that, marriage is both an individual and social structure. On one hand, it is a social institution and system of obligations, duties, rights and privileges. On the other hand, it means connecting and committing a loved and trusted one for emotional and sexual intimacy. That is, in short, “marriage is not only a personal commitment between partners, it is a social and legal commitment to the larger community” (2).

Marriage may be best understood in terms of need to belong. Bali et al. (3) suggests that need to belong is a very powerful motive, which leads people to have social attachments and to form and maintain enduring interpersonal relationships. Having a long-term intimate relationship generally produces positive emotions.

Although the positive associations related to happy marriages have been indicated, there is still a conceptual confusion in the term “marital satisfaction.” Several related terms, such as marital happiness, marital adjustment, marital stability and marital quality are commonly used in the literature instead of the term marital satisfaction (4) criticizes that, because these terms refers to different meanings, summarizing the research under the same term might lead faulty inferences. In this study, the definition of Yalcin and Karahan (5) is preferred to use: “Marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation by an individual of the degree of happiness, pleasure, or fulfillment experienced within the marital relationship between spouse and self.” Besides the conceptual confusion on the term marital satisfaction, theories on marital satisfaction do not also point the same construct.

Literature indicates several variables related to marital satisfaction. Olson and Miller (6) found that there is a positive

relationship between marital satisfaction and education level. That is, subjects with university degree reported higher marital satisfaction when they compared to their counterparts with a high-school degree. In addition, in terms of the relationship between marital satisfaction and gender, inconsistent results were reported.

However, the other is some studies and researches which show the locus of control is included in factors which play an important role in marital satisfaction. Locus of control as a psychological structure was first proposed and developed by Rotter in 1954. Rotter was seeking for some justifications for the behavior and personality inside and outside the organism and aimed to examine external reinforcement factors and internal cognitive processes. During an extensive research plan, Rotter found that some people believe that reinforcement factors depend on their own behaviors and practices while the others believe that their reinforcement factors are controlled by others and external forces. He first called this concept as reinforcement control and then as the locus of control (7).

The growth and development of locus of control have been increased since some researchers were studying and investigating in respect of understanding the reasons of behavior in the laboratory. Among these, Glasser was introduced into control theory system through the writings of William powers during the late 70s. By the invention of a new theory in psychology called as selection theory (internal control), Glasser (8) helped significantly to understand the behaviors of human-being under various conditions and situations. The selection theory is based on that we are the same persons whose behaviors are under our control and authority. On the other hand, based on selection theory, the only on the other hand, based on selection theory, the only person who can have control on us, are us ourselves.

Psychiatrists of selection theory believe

that the fundamental problem of most couples is the same. In marital relationships, the resort on external control psychology and seek to change their couples. In each relationship, of any kind and form, everyone is merely able to change himself and nobody else (9). The fundamental principle of selection theory which its understanding is highly important for the couples is that the only person you can control, are yourself. And the only person who can change is yourself. If you have unsuccessful and dissatisfied marital relationships, you should examine and see that what you can do to improve your relationship and not try to change a couple. Almost in all cases when you give up the external control and use internal control and its attractive communicative methods instead of it (listening, support and fidelity, encouragement and assurance, respect, trust, acceptance and friendship and permanent dialog on the differences) in your marital relationship, your couple will change (8). Furthermore in view of Glasser (10), internal control is the only way to maintain a satisfactory and permanent marital life.

Many researches are performed about internal and external control psychology which is very similar to the concept of Rotter's locus of control and Glasser's selection theory. According to these researches, the presence and increasing internal locus of control cases to increase in satisfaction and compatibility. Hünler and çneGz (11) reports that many researches show that the presence of the internal locus of control has a high and positive correlation with marital satisfaction and compatibility. Olson and Miller (6) showed in a research, when the internal locus of control increases both in male and female, marital satisfaction and compatibility will be increased. In view of the comparison between two genders, when the internal locus of control increases in males, in comparison to when the internal locus of control is high in females, marital

satisfaction and compatibility will further be increased. But when this is high in females, compatibility and satisfaction with marital life will not change.

According to this, the main goal of this research is to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of techniques obtained from an internal locus of control on increasing marital adjustment and satisfaction. The general and essential question of this research is that whether training intervention based on internal locus of control can cause increasing marital adjustment and satisfaction.

2. Materials and Methods

The research design was pre- and post-test with the control group. Statistical population of this research includes 100 married students of the Farhangian University of Babol, Iran. To determine the sample, initially 100 questionnaires of Rotter's locus of control and Spanier's marital adjustment were distributed among the married students. Among this population, 42 couples both had external locus of control and suffered marital maladjustment, 20 couples were selected by simple randomized method and were placed into two experimental and control groups, such that 10 couples were placed in the experimental group and 10 couples were placed in control group.

In this research, the following three tools were used to measure the studied variables:

It was performed in order to justify the work, to attract the trust of tastes, the goals and process of training and to evaluate whether the samples are proportional to the goals of research or not. Furthermore, the following cases were addressed in the interview: The criteria which are necessary for participation in the research are as follows: Achieving the score more than 9 in Rotter's locus of control scale, achieving general score >110 in spanier marital adjustment scale, marriage duration longer than 2 years, The criteria which cause to exclude the samples from research are as

follows, The existence of psychological disorder or record of mental disease and hospitalization, couples who suffer from incurable and refractory diseases, addiction to narcotic substances and drinking alcohol, primary sexual malfunction.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a 32-item scale developed (12) to assess the quality of the relationship of both unmarried cohabiting and married couples. Although the present study is interested in marital satisfaction instead of marital quality, the DAS which measures marital quality was preferred to use since marital satisfaction also refers to the quality of the relationship (13). DAS is a Likert-type scale with 5, 6 and 7 point items ranging from always agree to always disagree or all the time to never. It also consists two items which are answered as yes or no (14).

The scale measures four dimensions of a relationship which are dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion and affection expression. Possible total score range from 0 to 124 with higher scores demonstrating greater marital satisfaction (8). In addition to the total score, subscale scores can be used for specific questions. In relevance to the aim of the current study, only the total score of the DAS was preferred to use.

In terms of internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha of 0.96 for the total scale and that alpha for subscales ranging from 0.73 to 0.94. Were reported (14). Test-retest reliability of the DAS was reported as 0.87. Good content validity is reported by three judges. Additionally, in terms of criterion validity, DAS significantly and positively correlated with Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test which is a similar instrument (0.86 for married respondents, 0.88 for divorced respondents, and 0.93 for the combined sample) (14). Additionally, DAS is suggested as a reliable and valid instrument in much research (15).

Internal-External Locus of Control Scale

(I-E) Scale is a self-report instrument which was developed by Rotter (7) to evaluate the generalized control expectancies of the persons on an internality-externality continuum. The scale is consisted of 29 forced-choice items 6 of which are filler items that are used to cover the purpose of the scale. Other 23 items are scored as 0 or 1 point. Items indicating an external control orientation are scored as 1 point and higher scores indicate higher levels of external locus of control. Possible scores on the scale range from 0 to 23 (16).

In terms of reliability, internal consistency of the original scale was reported as 0.77; split-half reliability was reported as ranging from 0.65 to 0.79 and test-retest reliability was reported as ranging from 0.49 to 0.83 (16). In Iran, Movaffagh (17) used the simultaneous criterion reliability to examine the reliability of Rotter's internal-external locus of control scale. And Nowiki-Strikland's internal-external locus of control scale was used as the criterion of this study which the obtained reliability by the above-mentioned method was equal to 0.69.

Research procedure is as follows: During a 4 months period, the couples referred to the above centers were screened in terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Then, they were placed into two experimental and control groups by the simple randomized method. In this research, Pre-test is regarded as the primary option criterion (norm) of testers. After determining the samples and replacing them randomly in two experimental and control groups, some sessions to train the communicational skills based on internal locus of control were performed for the experimental group. The control group was not exposed to training. Training intervention based on internal control psychology was performed in 14 sessions. The duration of each session was 2 h and the frequency of sessions was once a week. Each session has three steps which include a review on the previous session,

presentation of training (educational) content, question, and answer, respectively. After finishing the training, marital adjustment test and locus of control test were again performed (executed) on two experimental and control groups as post-test. Then, the results of pre- and post-test were analyzed.

Stage 1: Preparation of couples: Step 1: Includes the preparation of couples for familiarity with each other and group leader. Step 2: Familiarity of couples with the process, goals, regulations dominant on sessions, benefits (advantages) of the training program of communicational skills based on internal control and performing pre-test.

Stage 2: Formulation of marital conflicts: Step 3: Formulation and identification of negative transaction cycles which have created marital conflicts. The problem includes the existence of destructive communicational methods of external control between the couples. Step 4: Training the couples for new understanding and insight toward internal and external loci of control, negative and destructive communicational methods of external control psychology and affection communicational methods of internal control psychology. Step 5: Helping the couples to assume the responsibility for their unconfirmed practices and selections which is the basis of this transactional situation. Step 6: Re-formulation of marital conflict based on the negative cycle of external locus of control and communicational methods of external control psychology are regarded as marital dissatisfaction and maladjustment of couples.

Stage 3: Change in transactional situation:

Step 7: Planning to improve marital relations. Step 8: Description of the role of each couple in creating the change. Step 9: preparing cooperation conditions among the couples to create the change and to improve marital relations. Step 10: Helping the couples to decrease marital dissatisfaction through the reduction and elimination of destructive communicational methods of external control. Step 11: Encouraging the couples to practice and apply internal control skills and methods in order to increase marital satisfaction and durability. Step 12: Describing this matter which each of the couples has the ability and opportunity for new selections and should assume the responsibility for the outcomes (consequences) of selections.

Stage four: Application and pursuance: Step 13: Encouragement and promotion of couples to practice and apply internal control methods and skills in marital relations.

Stage 5: Summation and preparation of couples for plan termination: Step 14: It includes the summation and preparation of couples for plan termination. In this session, three fundamental cases are performed: Encouragement and promotion of couples to apply the achievements of training program through practice in real life. Identification of couples who need personal intervention and planning a personal counseling session with them. Performance (administration) of post-test.

3. Results

For data analysis, independent t-test method for differential scores was used and the following results were obtained.

Table 1. Independent t-test for effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control on decreasing marital maladjustment

Groups	Parameters	Number	mean	SD	SE	t	df	P
Men	Experimental	10	-14.29	7.83	2.60	-6.04	19	0.001
	Control	10	2.56	4.96	1.44			
Woman	Experimental	10	-13.75	11.29	3.75	-4.71		
	Control	10	3.12	5.60	1.61			

SD: Standard deviation; SE: Standard error; df: Degrees of freedom

Table 2. Independent t-test for effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control in increasing marital attachment of couples

Groups	Parameters	Number	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	P
Men	Experimental	10	1.30	2.05	0.69	2.25	19	0.003
	Control	10	-0.32	1.30	0.76			
Woman	Experimental	10	1.85	1.91	0.60	3.23		
	Control	10	-0.59	1.60	0.47			

SD: Standard deviation; SE: Standard error; df: Degrees of freedom

Table 3. Independent t-test for the effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control in increasing marital adjustment of couples

Groups	Parameters	Number	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	P
Men	Experimental	10	7.65	4.56	1.02	-5.63	19	0.001
	Control	10	-0.90	2.60	0.75			
Woman	Experimental	10	7.40	6.03	2	2.90		
	Control	10	1.25	3.60	1.50			

SD: Standard deviation; SE: Standard error; df: Degrees of freedom

Table 4. Independent t-test for the effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control in increasing the marital affection expression of couples

Groups	Parameters	Number	mean	SD	SE	t	df	P
Men	Experimental	10	2.56	2.30	0.75	3.52	19	0.001
	Control	10	-0.40	1.55	0.45			
Woman	Experimental	10	3.86	3.05	1.01	4.44		
	Control	10	-0.80	1.82	0.50			

SD: Standard deviation; SE: Standard error; df: Degrees of freedom

Based on the results mentioned in table 1, since the calculated t-value ($t = 6.04$) and ($t = 4.71$) for women and men, respectively with degree of freedom of 19 is bigger than t-value in the table ($t = 2.53$); therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and with confidence degree of 99%. We conclude that, training communicational skills based on internal locus of control is effective in decreasing marital maladjustment of couples. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Based on the results mentioned in table 3, since the calculated t-value ($t = 5.63$) and ($t = 2.90$) for women and men, respectively with freedom degree of 19 is bigger than t-value in the table ($t = 2.53$); therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and with confidence degree of 99% and we can conclude that, training communicational skills based on internal locus of control is effective in increasing the marital adjustment. Therefore, the research third hypothesis is confirmed.

Based on the results mentioned in table 4, since the calculated t-value ($t = 3.52$) and ($t = 4.44$) for women and men, respectively with degree of freedom of 19 is bigger than t-value in the table ($t = 2.53$); therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and with confidence degree of 99% and we can conclude that, training communicational skills based on internal locus of control is effective in increasing marital affection expression. Therefore, the research fourth hypothesis is confirmed.

Based on the results mentioned in table 5, since the calculated t-value ($t = 5.10$) and ($t = 4.70$) for women and men, respectively with degree of freedom of 19 is bigger than t-value in the table ($t = 2.53$); therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and with confidence degree of 99% and we can conclude that, training communicational skills based on internal locus of control is effective in increasing marital satisfaction expression. Therefore, the research fourth hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 5. Independent t-test for the effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control in increasing the marital satisfaction of couples

Groups	Parameters	Number	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	P
Men	Experimental	10	3.50	2.69	0.89	5.10	19	0.001
	Control	10	-1.24	1.61	0.47			
Woman	Experimental	10	5.60	4.03	1.35	4.70		
	Control	10	-0.90	2.25	0.64			

SD: Standard deviation; SE: Standard error; df: Degrees of freedom

4. Discussion

In the current paper, the effectiveness of training communicational skills based on internal locus of control on increasing marital adjustment and satisfaction has been investigated. Research results showed that training communicational skills based on internal locus of control was effective on decreasing marital dissatisfaction and was able to increase the levels of marital adjustment, satisfaction, cohesion and affection between the couples. Based on the results mentioned in figure 1 we understand The results of this research has coordination with Glasser's choice theory (8) which claims that decreasing destructive communicational methods of external control using affection-communicational methods of internal control psychology causes to decrease marital dissatisfaction. Also, the results of this research has coordination with Gottman's view (18) who believes that the couples have maladjusted marital relationship when they have special negative transactions (criticizing, insult, aggressive and defensive behavior, rage).

To describe the findings of this research, it can be said in external control, the couples apply some methods to control the other person. Developing Glasser's (10) selection theory pattern, the researchers classify these methods as "seven kinds of negative and destructive communicational method of external control psychology." The researchers mean seven negative and destructive communicational methods of external control psychology as seven disastrous methods which suppress all the attempts of couples

during marital relations. These seven negative and destructive communicational methods are as follows from less dangerous to more dangerous: criticizing, insult, blaming, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rage. Also, there is bilateral interaction and effect between them. This is how communicational methods of internal control psychology which had gradually and harmfully been begun with romantic promises and with joy and happiness, are destroyed. According to the findings of this research and the views of other marriage specialists such as Glasser (8) and Guttman (18), it can be concluded what causes the conflicts, marital dissatisfaction and divorce, are seven kinds of negative and destructive communicational methods of external control psychology which the couples use them shortly after the marriage when encounter with different problems and/ or for changing and controlling the other person. These change the marital problems into marital maladjustment; finally they will result in marital maladjustment; finally they will result in marital dissatisfaction and divorce. Drawing circular diagram to describe the quality of bilateral interaction and impact between external control psychological elements and marital maladjustment.

According to the findings of present research, the application of seven kinds of positive affection communicational methods and internal control psychology was effective on decreasing and improving marital conflicts Researchers mean seven kinds of positive affection communicational methods of internal control psychology as seven affection communicational methods of internal control

psychology include: respect, trust, support and loyalty, acceptance, encouragement, listening and dialogue.

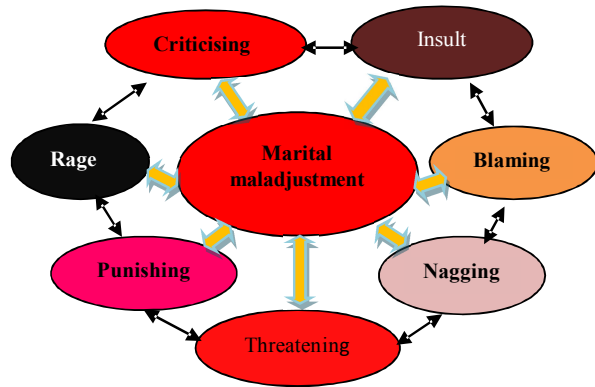


Figure 1. Bilateral interaction and impact between external control psychological elements to create marital maladjustment

In this research, it was determined that there is a positive bilateral relationship and impact between the elements of internal control psychology. In view of the researchers and other marriage specialists such as Glasser (12) and Gottman (18), marital relationship based on communicational methods of internal control psychology is the most important and appropriate method to have a happy, affectionate and durable (stable) marital life. To attain this essential goal, the couples can replace seven communicational – affection methods of internal control psychology by seven destructive communicational methods of external control psychology in marital relationships. Drawing a circular diagram to describe the quality of bilateral interaction and impact between psychological elements of internal control to create marital adjustment. Figure 2 shows Bilateral interaction and impact between psychological elements of internal control to create marital adjustment.

The results of this research are compatible with the studies and findings of Glasser (8); relnÜH dna çneGz ;)11(noslO dna relliM ;)6(According to these researches, the existence and increase in internal locus of control in the

couples cause to increase the sexual satisfaction dna latiram tnemtsujda. relnÜH dna z (11) reports that many researches show that the presence of the internal locus of control has a high and positive correlation with sexual satisfaction and compatibility. Olson and Miller (6) showed in a research, when the internal locus of control increases both in male and female, sexual satisfaction, and compatibility will be increased. The studies of Glasser (9) show that internal control psychology is the just way to maintain a permanent and satisfactory marital life and external control psychology is the main source of misfortune and sadness and grief of marital life.

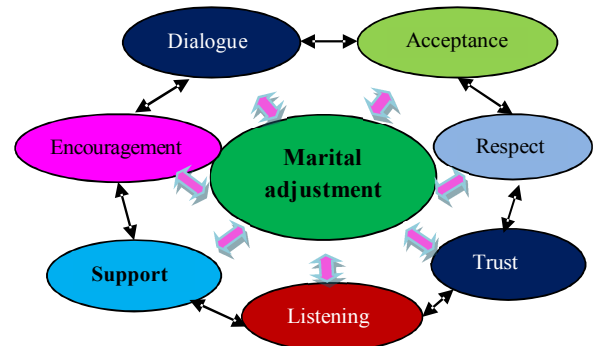


Figure 2. Bilateral interaction and impact between psychological elements of internal control to create marital adjustment

Drawing the combined circular diagram to describe the quality of the effect of communicational methods of external and internal control psychology on creating marital dissatisfaction and satisfaction.

According to the results of present research, it can be said that one of the appropriate techniques to improve marital conflicts is training intervention based on internal locus of control. This model can be used for couples who suffer from marital conflict and dissatisfaction and think of divorce to solve their marital problems. In this way, the occurrence of the ominous phenomenon of divorce can be prevented and controlled to a high extent.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to acknowledge all individuals who opened their favor eyes on this research and didn't withhold their assistance hands from me. In this direction, most importantly, I am indebted by sincere friendship of my two scientist professors: Professor Dr. Kamo Vardanyan who assumed the scholarly conduct of my dissertation and Professor Dr. Miss Shokouh Navvabinejad who accepted the wisely consulting of it. Certainly, the sincere and friendly assistance of these two honorable professors in performing this research, allotted a valuable provision for me and scientific society of Iran and the world.

References

1. Yalcin BM, Karahan TF. Effects of a couple communication program on marital adjustment. *J Am Board Fam Med* 2007; 20(1): 36-44.
2. Scuka RF. The radical nature of the relationship enhancement expressive skill and its implications for therapy and psychoeducation. *The Family Journal* 2011; 19(1): 130-5.
3. Bali A, Dhingra R, Baru A. Marital adjustment of childless couples. *J Soc Sci* 2010; 24(1): 73-6.
4. Ginsberg BG. Relationship enhancement couple therapy and couple group therapy. *Group* 2006; 30(2): 5-24.
5. Yalcin BM, Karahan TF. Effects of a couple communication program on marital adjustment. *J Am Board Fam Med* 2007; 20(1): 36-44.
6. Olson DH, Miller Sh. Integrating prepare/enrich and couple communication programs: An longitudinal follow-up study. 2007 [Online]. [cited 2014]; Available from: URL:https://www.prepare-enrich.com/pe/pdf/research/pe_and_cpl_communication.pdf
7. Rotter JB. Internal versus external control of reinforcement: A case history of a variable. *American Psychologist* 1990; 45(4): 489-93.
8. Glasser W. The language of choice theory. Trans. Sahebi A. Tehran, Iran: Saye-e Sokhan, Roshd-e Farhang Publications; 2013. p. 3-5, 10-15.
9. Glasser W. The language of choice theory. Trans. Sahebi A. Tehran, Iran: Saye-e Sokhan, Roshd-e Farhang Publications; 2007. p. 10-15.
10. Glasser W. Eight lessons for a happier marriage. Trans. Firouzbakht M. Tehran, Iran: Virayesh Publications; 2007. p. 111-5.
11. relnüH ,SO çneGzT. evissimbuS sruoivaheb and marital satisfaction relation: mediator role of perceived marital problem solving. *Turkish Journal of Psychology* 2003; 18(51): 99-108.
12. Spanier GB. Measuring dyadic adjustment: new scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 1976; 38(1): 15-28.
13. Volsky JA. Intimacy, marital satisfaction, and sexuality in mature couples [MSc Thesis]. Montreal, QC: Concordia University; 1998.
14. Fisiloglu, H, Demir A. Applicability of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale for measurement of marital quality with Turkish couples. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment* 2000; 16(3): 214-8.
15. Kurdek LA. Dimensionality of the dyadic adjustment scale: evidence from heterosexual and homosexual couples. *Journal of Family Psychology* 1992; 6(1): 22-35.
16. Dag I. Locus of control scale: Scale development, reliability and validity study. *Turk Journal of Psychology* 2002; 17(49): 77-90.
17. Movaffagh Kh. Finding the norm for Rotter's internal-external (I-E) locus of control scale in Mashhad city [MSc Thesis]. Tehran, Iran: Allameh Tabataba'i University; 1996. p. 12-22. [In Persian]
18. Gottman JM. A theory of marital dissolution and stability. *Journal of Family Psychology* 1993; 7(1): 57-75.