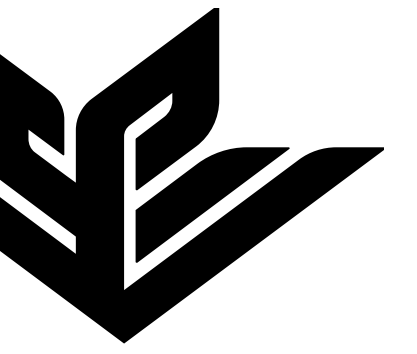


Emotionally-focused Therapy and Couples from Collectivistic Cultures: Impacts on Relationship Satisfaction



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the efficacy of EFT in increasing marital satisfaction in couples of a non-Western, collectivist origin. Our treatment group, consisting of 30 couples of a non-Western, collectivist origin will participate in 14 sessions of EFT in which their marital satisfaction will be measured pretreatment, posttreatment, and at 6- and 12-month follow-ups. Utilizing a control group consisting of 30 couples of a Western, non-collectivist origin receiving the same treatment, we seek to explore how cultural factors such as a collectivist mindset and the de-emphasis of individual's feelings and emotions might affect the efficacy of EFT in one or more directions.

INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Extensive research has shown EFT to be an effective intervention in improving marital satisfaction (Beasley & Ager, 2019).
- ❑ Emotions are highly prioritized within EFT. Consistent with its humanistic quality, it sees emotion as the "target and agent of change" (Johnson, 2020).
- ❑ While evidence points to culture having an influence on attachment, with individualism/collectivism potentially being a moderator, further research is needed to determine its and other cultural influences on attachment (Agishstein and Brumbaugh, 2013).
- ❑ Though studies do exist to suggest that attachment-based interventions (i.e., "Hold Me Tight" program) may be effective in treating couples of non-Western, collectivist origin, there is a scarcity of research that compares EFT's impact on couples who originate from a non-Western, collectivist culture versus those who originate from of Western, individualistic one (Wong et al, 2017).

PRIMARY AIM AND HYPOTHESES

- ❑ Is Emotionally-focused Therapy (EFT) effective at increasing marital satisfaction for couples who originate from non-Western, collectivist cultures compared to couples from Western, individualistic cultures?
- ❑ It is believed that EFT will be less effective for couples from non-Western, collectivist cultures than for couples from Western, individualistic ones.

METHODS

Participants

- ❑ 30 couples from collectivistic cultures (i.e., East Asian, Middle Eastern, etc.) and 30 couples from Western individualistic cultures, all who are currently living in the Western United States
- ❑ Participants will be recruited from local neighborhood centers, meeting spaces (cultural centers, churches, etc.), and social media (Facebook groups) by using word of mouth, physical flyers for free couples therapy, and web-based advertising.
- ❑ Exclusion Criteria: Couples from Eastern, collectivistic cultures must be 1st or 2nd generation immigrants to the United States. All couples must be married or in a committed relationship.

Procedures

- ❑ Selected participants will receive 14 weekly or biweekly sessions of EFT, administered by licensed therapists.
- ❑ Data will be collected at four points during the study: Before the initial session, after the last session, at 6-months follow-up, and 12 months follow-up.

MEASURES

Relationship Satisfaction

- ❑ Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; 1976) will be used to assess relationship satisfaction with 32 items across four subscales. Each partner completes the measurement individually. Scores are summed, added and divided by two to find the couple average. Higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction with scores This scale has been used in many studies assessing couple relationships, including many studies examining the effectiveness of EFT. In addition, this scale has been translated into several languages, including Chinese and Arabic.
- ❑ Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSAT; 1992), an 11-item, 7-point Likert-style measure, will also be used to measure relationship satisfaction across several domains including understanding and acceptance of the relationship, oneself, and one's partner. Scores are summed and can be as high as 78, with higher scores meaning greater satisfaction.
- ❑ Experiences in Close Relationships-Short Form (ECR; 2007) is a 12-item, 7-point Likert-style measure for relationship satisfaction and adult attachment that has been used many times in the assessment of EFT. The 12 items are divided into two subscales: Avoidance and Anxiety. Each has six items. Higher cumulative scores suggest insecure attachment styles, while lower suggest a more secure adult attachment style.

RESULTS

Analysis

- ❑ ANOVA test used to determine group differences between EFT with collectivist vs. individualistic couples.

Discussion

Social implications:

- ❑ Our study draws attention to a disregarded population regarding the treatment of couples with EFT, partially due to assumptions made that EFT, as an emotion-centered treatment modality, is not compatible with non-Western forms of emotional expression and attachment. Our study may help couples from this population understand their relationship from an attachment perspective.

Clinical implications:

- ❑ Our study may give clinicians clarity on the usefulness of EFT as a treatment modality with couples from collectivistic cultures, specifically first and second-generation immigrants.

Implications for Future Research:

- ❑ The results of this study may suggest that EFT alone is minimally effective for couples from collectivistic cultures. Further research could investigate which specific factors of EFT are of benefit.
- ❑ Positive results may suggest the development of more culturally sensitive language within the utilization of EFT with couples from collectivistic cultures.