



Research Article

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Investigating the effectiveness of Bowenian family therapy in boredom and forgiveness of individuals affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse

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ABSTRACT

This research is a semi-experimental study (pretest-posttest design with a nonequivalent control group) which has been conducted with the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of family system therapy in boredom and forgiveness among the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse. The research statistical population consisted of all the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse who referred (during March 2015 to March 2016) to psychological services clinics in Mashhad. The research sample comprised 30 people from these women who were selected voluntarily and through available sampling method. The research tools included Couple Burnout Measure (CBM; Pines & Nanz) and Forgiveness Scale (Pollard, Anderson, Anderson & Jennings, 1998). To analyze the data, analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was applied. The results obtained from data analysis demonstrated that family system therapy has been effective in marital boredom and forgiveness among the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse in the experimental group compared to the control group ($P < 0.05$).

Keywords: *Family system therapy, boredom, forgiveness*

INTRODUCTION

Family is the oldest social institution and has existed since the dawn of mankind and begins with marital relations or the bond between husband and wife and depending on the quality of this relationship, its stability or instability is determined (Qamari, 2011). On the other hand, people usually undertake to get married with high hopes and tend to be optimistic about the chance of success of their marriage. Studies have shown that there are high expectations from any romantic relationship and it seems that the issue of fidelity is an essential component of any long-term relationship (De Santis et al., 2014).

Extramarital relationships are one of the most important threats to the stability of marital relations and also among the most common reasons for divorce in different cultures. Marital infidelity is one of the issues which couples' therapists regularly face in their clinical practice (Whisman & Wagers, 2005). Marital infidelity refers to any relationship (sexual or emotional) outside the framework of a committed relationship between couples, which has a strong effect on the performance and stability of the marital relationship (Drigotas, Safstrom & Gentilia, 1999). Emotional reactions such as depression, anger, embarrassment and distress in many individuals referring to psychotherapy and counseling centers resulted from exposing the spouse's infidelity (Cano, & O'Leary, 2000). With the occurrence or disclosure of infidelity, physical, psychological and emotional well-being of both partners is threatened and violence, murder and suicide have been reported in these cases (DiBlasio & Benda, 2008).

From the perspective of therapists, extramarital relationships mostly emphasize two concepts of disloyalty or betrayal. Disloyalty includes all the behaviors and performance of a married person with the opposite sex outside the framework of the family so that it leads to a friendly, intimate, emotional and romantic relationship and this relationship has certain excitements for the spouse committing infidelity. Betrayal includes the establishment of a sexual relationship by a married person with the opposite sex outside the framework of the family (other than the spouse) (Sohrabi & Rasouli, 2008).

A special issue in any intimate relationship is the negative reaction to real or imaginary attraction of life partner to someone else. Some believe that men are further threatened by sexual attraction of their partner to a male rival whereas women are more threatened by emotional attraction of their partner to a female rival. Infidelity in marital relations is one of the main reasons for divorce and damages the couples (Lin et al., 2004). Secret relations outside the scope of marriage always deliver a severe emotional blow to the parties. This type of relationship causes the incidence of symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and also feelings such as depression, anger, despair, lack of self-confidence, loss of identity and feeling of worthlessness in the spouse who has been betrayed. Marital infidelity also leads to a sense of uncertainty, depression and guilt in the spouse who has betrayed (Allemand et al., 2007).

One of the variables related to marriage betrayals is marital boredom. The first writings in which boredom has been mentioned belong to Shakespeare (1599). Boredom is a set of emotional exhaustion symptoms, depersonalization and reduced productivity. Emotional fatigue refers to the exhaustion or depletion of emotional resources that are created by interpersonal demands. Depersonalization focuses on negative growth and having censorious, cruel and cynical tendencies towards the spouse, which includes some disturbances and distresses and is completely different from the psychological aspect of these symptoms (Naaman et al., 2005). Anderson and Pines (1988) consider boredom as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion which is created in the conditions of long-term conflict along with emotional demands. From the perspective of existentialism and psychoanalysis, boredom is an experienced state of physical, emotional and psychological exhaustion arising from chronic mismatch between expectations and reality (Pines, 2003; cited in Shadab, 2004).

Marital boredom is a painful state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion and affects the expecting couples. This state occurs when they realize that in spite of their efforts, their relationship did not and will not give meaning to life. Marital boredom derives from mismatch between reality and expectations and its rate depends on the compatibility of couples and their beliefs. Boredom begins with the relationship collapse and also growth of awareness and attention to things that are not as pleasing as the past and if at this stage, nothing is done to prevent the progression of this trend, everything becomes worse (Pines, 1996) and usually it gradually and hardly results from an unpleasant phenomenon or even some uncomfortable blows. Indeed, accumulation of frustrations and tensions of everyday life causes erosion and ultimately leads to boredom (Cited in Naeim, 2008).

According to Pines and Nanz (2003), a person does not become bored unless he is heavily engaged in a subject (like love and work). If nothing is done to stop this process, things get worse day by day. Periods of discontentment that rarely occurred to individuals now happen frequently and those mild feelings of dissatisfaction turn into fierce anger and the individual feels that he is physically and emotionally exhausted. According to Naalt (2005), signs of boredom consist of general lack of passion, lack of satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, apathy and lack of interest. Bored people may feel that they are less likely to reach their desired result despite great efforts. They may become angry sooner than the normal state and feel that they have lost their sense of humor and the ability to have fun (Cited in Walker & Gorsuch, 2002).

According to existential psychologists (Yalom, 1980), if self-actualization helps us resist the fear of death in the occupational field, an intimate relationship and joining another person will help the resistance to the fear of life (Pines & Nanz, 2003). Based on the work by Rank, Becker (1973) believes that dreamy love enables individuals to join the specific feature that they love (which is manifest in someone else) and see that person as being superior to themselves (Cited in Bahrami & Aslami, 2009). Psychoanalytic theory has made a major contribution to the existential theory and studies through adding the unconscious aspect of choices of dreamy love because a person chooses a dreamy spouse to enable him/her to repeat the important experiences of his/her childhood and serve those unsatisfied needs of his/her childhood (Pines, 2002; cited in Jamshidi, Razmi & Haqiqat, 2008). From the standpoint of Frankl's logo therapy, a

bored person does not have a sense of meaningfulness. He experiences failure as an individual and sense of failure and meaninglessness is the most important factor to increase his boredom (Cited in Naderi & Azadmanesh, 2012).

Halston (1993; cited in Backus, 2009) has presented a more comprehensive framework for the process of boredom. He defines boredom as a form of depression resulting from the process of exhaustion. Some studies suggest that boredom grows within depression under certain conditions. For example, bored people become depressed when depression is accompanied by the feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) regard boredom as a progressive frustration which includes four progressive stages. These stages comprise enthusiasm, stagnation, disappointment, and disinterest and apathy (Cited in Karimi et al., 2012).

The results obtained from the study by Soleimani (2009) indicate a significant difference between relationship beliefs and subscales of the belief in destructiveness, opposition, mind-reading expectation and immutability of the spouse, but the difference between the two subscales of sexual perfectionism and belief in gender differences was not significant in the two groups. Kahki (2008) in a study showed that nurses suffer from high pressure and job burnout. The results also revealed that there is a significant relationship between the components of job burnout and marital boredom. Asadi et al. (2013) found that there is significant difference between marital boredom, sexual dysfunction beliefs and sexual assertiveness in women. Sharifi et al. (2012) performed a study and demonstrated that a relationship exists between the schemas of love and justification of extramarital relationships. Additionally, significant differences were observed between types of love schemas in terms of the amount of justifying extramarital relationships. In a research, Ray et al. (2005) examined the relationship between job burnout and marital burnout in six cultures. The results indicated that Finnish women relative to men have significantly higher means in both job and marital burnouts. Further, there is a positive correlation between the indicators of marital and occupational relationships.

Another important variable in extramarital relationships is family forgiveness. Forgiving oneself and others can help individuals in facing the negative consequences of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts and facilitate psychological well-being and meaningful social relationships. Considering these instances, it is clear that both features of self-compassion and forgiveness have a strong cognitive component and are influenced by individual attitudes toward oneself and others. Non-forgiveness of oneself and others leads to mental rumination and evokes depressive symptoms. Further, it has been evident that some depressive symptoms associated with compassion and forgiveness including sense of guilt, self-blame and most importantly, suicidal thoughts and actions are further observed in depressed youths rather than depressed children and elderly people (Brown & Phillips, 2005).

The tendency to forgive others can protect the individual against negative interpersonal experiences and depression-related perceptions. Studies have revealed that people who do not forgive are more likely to become depressed (Freedman & Knupp, 2008). However, the causal direction of this phenomenon is not clear and it has been demonstrated in some cases that individuals with a tendency for rumination about unpleasant and negative experiences of the past are less likely to forgive others and also are more likely to become depressed (Neff, Kirkpartkl & Rude, 2007). Moreover, research has shown that depressed people quickly recall the harassment by others (DeSantis, 2014). They are also likely to interpret events in a negative and distorted way. These individuals tend to judge their social relations based on the past negative experiences (Chow, 2007). In the study by Chow (2007), it was found that depression makes a great impact on forgiveness. In this study, depressed people relative to non-depressed people were less willing to forgive a slight error of a familiar person.

DiBlasio and Benda (2008) conducted a study and compared forgiveness in three groups of normal people and people with clinical and non-clinical depression. They demonstrated that normal people have more forgiveness compared to depressed individuals. In this research, no difference was found between people with clinical and non-clinical depression in terms of forgiveness rate. The variable of forgiveness as another component of Positive Psychology has been the focus of attention in the field of health. Thus, almost in the earliest investigations about forgiveness, its relationship with health has been addressed. Forgiveness like psychological and physical well-being is of great importance and aims to improve the quality of interpersonal and emotional relationships (Fincham, Hall & Beach, 2006).

McCullough and Witvliet (2002) have defined forgiveness as a motivational desire that leads people to avoiding unpleasant communication responses and behaving positively towards who has treated them negatively. Maltby, Day and Barber (2004) consider forgiveness as a positive adaptation process which is displayed by the release of hateful emotions, cognitions and behaviors towards the aggressor so that it develops compassion, generosity and satisfaction for that person. Forgiveness has a historical and archetypal meaning which has been encouraged and sanctified as a divine attribute in religious literature (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2002). Gambaro, Enright, Baskin and Klatt (2008) argued that individuals who forgive more than others less report physical and mental health problems. Witvliet, Ludwig and Vander Laan (2001) observed that those who were trained to give the wrongdoer responses without forgiveness compared to people who have learned to provide responses along with forgiveness showed faster heart rate, higher blood pressure and more skin responses.

Regarding the treatment of boredom and forgiveness problems in the family, different treatments have been offered. Family therapy approaches are separable despite their common factors. Theories and approaches of family therapy have different types, which on one end of this spectrum are psychodynamic approaches, individual processes and systemic approaches and on the other end are systemic, postmodern and system-oriented approaches. Murray Bowen and Michael Kerr were the principal architects of Bowenian family therapy. However, the main originator of this approach was Murray Bowen who from the beginning formulated ideas that led to a prominent theory in family therapy (Karimi et al., 2014). Murray Bowen's approach which is called family systems theory was proposed by him in 1960. Family therapy pioneers acknowledged that individuals are products of their social background, but they limited their attention to the nuclear family (Asgari et al., 2012). Bowen found that emotional intensity of mother-child interaction is more important than he thought. More importantly, emotional intensity of mother-child interaction affects the entire family relations; not only the relationship between mother and child. Father, brothers and sisters also play an important role in the creation and perpetuation of family problems. Bowen realized that these relationships assume a form of triangular alliance and continue and are resolved between different sets of family members. Interoperability of family members was so obvious that Bowen developed the concept of mother and child coexistence so that he viewed the whole family in an unbalanced emotional unit consisting of members who cannot successfully separate themselves from each other (Hindman, 2002).

In Bowen's approach, therapists have goals whose importance is in the fact that they cause the families to achieve their goals more quickly. According to Bowen's theory (1988), the main objectives of treatment are as follows: reduced anxiety in the family and that family members are allowed to improve their ability to function independently and reduce their morbid behaviors; increased level of differentiating oneself in each family member and that the members become able to effectively respond to intense emotional situations; Bowen's theory is based on the concept of differentiation (Cited in Seif & Bahari, 2003).

At the core of Bowen's theory, there are three systems and he believes that each individual possesses three main systems: emotional system, affective system and rational system. Emotional system is associated with automatic responses that we make. It is the initial system of humans over which we have no control and this system is always beyond human consciousness. Affective system is our internal and private reaction. However, it can be said that this system evaluates and controls our emotional system. Rational system is the intellectual system of our existence where established talents decide how to take action (Fincham, Hall & Beach, 2006).

Bowen's current theory about family in the form of an effective communication system comprises eight interlocking concepts. Considering that these concepts in Bowen's idea are interconnected is of crucial importance since each concept helps to describe other concepts and is itself defined by other concepts. Therefore, Bowen's theory indicates the systemic nature of human behavior. Six of its concepts are devoted to emotional processes of nuclear and extended family and the last two concepts, i.e. emotional cutoff and societal regression, are related to intergenerational emotional processes in the family and society. The underlying premise connecting these eight concepts is that chronic anxiety appears in various forms and its intensity varies according to different family situations and cultural considerations. Based on Bowen's theory, the following eight forces form the family function: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cutoff, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position and societal regression (Millikin, 2000).

What makes Bowen’s theory so beneficial is that this theory describes emotional forces that regulate how we communicate with others. The single biggest obstacle to understand others is our willingness to be reactive emotionally. This state of being emotional like all the matters relating to relationships is a two-way street (Peluso, 2003).

Research methodology

This research is a semi-experimental study (pretest-posttest design with a nonequivalent control group) which has been performed with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of family system therapy in boredom and forgiveness among the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse. To this end, a pretest was initially taken from the statistical population. Then, the experimental group received family system therapy based on Bowen’s approach. But the control group received no intervention. At the end of the treatment period, both groups took a posttest.

Statistical population

The research target population comprised all the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse who referred (during March 2015 to March 2016) to psychological services clinics in Mashhad.

Statistical sample

The research sample included 30 people from the above-mentioned women who were selected voluntarily and through available sampling method and were randomly assigned into two experimental and control groups, each containing 15 subjects.

Research tools

Couple Burnout Measure (CBM): This questionnaire is a self-assessment tool which has been designed to measure the marital boredom of couples. It consists of 21 items and includes three main components of physical exhaustion (e.g., feelings of fatigue and weakness and having a sleep disorder), emotional exhaustion (e.g., feelings of depression, hopelessness and entrapment) and mental exhaustion (e.g., feelings of worthlessness, frustration and anger towards the spouse). All of these items are responded on a 7-point scale (Pines, 1996; translated by Shadab, 2002). The internal consistency of the questionnaire is within the range of 0.84 to 0.90. Navidi (2005) has reported Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire to be 0.86 for a one-month period, 0.76 for a two-month period and 0.66 for a four-month period.

Family Forgiveness Questionnaire: This scale has been developed by Pollard, Anderson, Anderson and Jennings (1998; translated by Seif & Bahari, 2003). It is composed of 40 items and two sections. The first 20 items are related to the main family and other 20 items are associated with current marital relations. Scoring of this questionnaire is done on a five-point Likert scale. Earning a high score in this test represents a high level of forgiveness. Magyar (2001) estimated the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire to be 0.93. Seif and Bahari (2003) obtained the reliability of the whole test to be 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha method. Naderi and Azadmanesh (2012) also reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire to be 0.85.

Data analysis method

In the descriptive section, descriptive statistical indices such as mean and standard deviation were used to examine the demographic characteristics of the subjects. In evaluating the research hypotheses, analysis of covariance test and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) were applied.

Research findings

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of pretest and posttest scores in Couple Burnout Measure and Forgiveness Scale of the experimental and control groups

Group	Variable	Pretest	Posttest
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		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Experimental	Boredom	86.8	20.00071	74.5333	20.31139
	Forgiveness	108.6	13.96833	114.8	13.54464
Control	Boredom	80.2	20.19618	75.4667	21.50039
	Forgiveness	107.5333	17.12503	108.9333	16.81184

The first research hypothesis suggested that “training based on Bowenian family system therapy can help improve the boredom of the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse”. In order to investigate this hypothesis, ANCOVA test was employed.

Table 2: Summary of the results of multivariate analysis of covariance to compare marital boredom of the experimental and control groups

Effect	Tests	Values	F	DOF of the effect	DOF of the error	Significance level	Effect size
Group	Pillai's trace	0.472	6.849	3	23	0.002	0.472
	WilksLambda	0.528	6.849	3	23	0.002	0.472
	Hotelling's trace	0.893	6.849	3	23	0.002	0.472
	Roy'slargest root	0.893	6.849	3	23	0.002	0.472

As can be observed in Table 2, the significance level of all the four related multivariate statistics, i.e. Pillai's trace, WilksLambda, Hotelling's trace and Roy's largest root, is lower than 0.01 (P<0.01). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is revealed that there is significance difference between the participants of the experimental and control groups at least in terms of one of the components related to marital boredom in the posttest. Accordingly, it can be mentioned that training based on Bowenian family system therapy has been effective in improved marital boredom of couples. In order to examine the difference between the experimental and control groups in each of the components related to marital boredom, between subject effects test was used.

Table 3: Between subject effects test to compare the components of marital boredom in the experimental and control groups in the posttest

Variable	Source	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance level	Effect size
Physical exhaustion	Between group	46.653	1	46.653	13.301	0.001	0.347
	Within-group	87.689	25	3.508			
	Total	1015.867	29				

Emotional exhaustion	Between group	36.384	1	36.384	13.325	0.001	0.348
	Within-group	68.261	25	2.730			
	Total	1573.367	29				
Mental exhaustion	Between group	23.938	1	23.938	9.111	0.006	0.267
	Within-group	65.684	25	2.627			
	Total	1950.3	29				

Given the results provided in Table 3, F value obtained for all the components including physical, emotional and mental exhaustion is significant at the level of 0.01. So, the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. With regard to the reduced mean score of the experimental group in the posttest, it is concluded that training based on family system therapy has been effective and leads to the improvement of marital boredom.

The second research hypothesis indicated that “training based on Bowenian family system therapy is effective in the improved forgiveness of the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse”. To investigate this hypothesis, analysis of covariance test was applied.

Table 4: Summary of the results of analysis of covariance test to compare the

Forgiveness of the experimental and control groups in the posttest

Source of changes	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance level	Effect size
Pretest	6396.672	1	6396.672	1342.361	0.001	0.576
Group	175.107	1	175.107	36.747	0.001	
Error	128.661	27	4.765			
Total	6783.467	29				

As seen in Table 4, the obtained F value is equal to 36.74 and its significance level is also less than 0.01. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Accordingly, with regard to higher mean score of the experimental group in the posttest, it can be concluded that training based on Bowenian family system therapy has been effective and improved forgiveness among the couples affected by extramarital relationships of the spouse.

Discussion and conclusion

In the first research hypothesis, with regard to reduced mean score of the experimental group in the posttest, it is concluded that the difference between the two groups is significant in terms of marital boredom and its components. Thus, training based on Bowenian family system therapy has been effective in marital boredom and all its components (physical, emotional and mental exhaustion) and leads to its improvement in couples.

Findings of the present research are consistent with the results obtained by Soleimani (2005), Kahki (2008), Sharifi et al. (2012), Laos and Laos (2001), Attari, Hoseinpour and Rahnavard (2009), Asadi et al. (2013), Mousavi et al. (2006), Naaman et al. (2005), Navidi (2005) and Attari et al. (2009) who demonstrated that communication skills training and family system therapy are effective in reducing the marital boredom of couples.

In explaining this hypothesis, it can be said that betrayal destroys basic beliefs, relationships and commitment of couples. When a betrayal occurs, the individual experiences feelings of serious confusion, vulnerability and loss of identity and self-confidence and this gradually leads to fatigue and boredom of married life (Case, 2005; cited in Peluso, 2007). Extramarital relationships are considered as one of the most important threats to the stability of marital relationships and among the major reasons for divorce in different cultures (Bass, 1997). Various emotional reactions such as depression, anger, embarrassment and distress in many of the individuals referring to psychotherapy and counseling centers have resulted from exposing the spouse' betrayal (Cano & O'Leary, 2000). With the occurrence or disclosure of betrayal, physical, psychological and emotional well-being of both partners is threatened and violence, murder and suicide have been reported in these cases (Drigotas, Safstrom&Gentilia, 1999). As previously mentioned, these psychological states are responsible for marital boredom.

One explanation of this hypothesis is based on the views of Anderson and Pines. Anderson and Pines (1988) believe that boredom is a state of physical, emotional and mental fatigue that is created in conditions of long-term conflict along with emotional demands and consequently extramarital relationships. Boredom includes a set of emotional exhaustion symptoms, depersonalization and reduced productivity. Emotional fatigue refers to the exhaustion or depletion of emotional resources that are created by interpersonal demands. Depersonalization indicates negative growth and having censorious, cruel and cynical tendencies towards the spouse, which includes some disturbances and distresses and is completely different from the psychological aspect of these symptoms. These features are primarily the result of extramarital relationships (Schaufeli&Buunk, 2003).

Another explanation of this hypothesis is based on the views of Naalt and Halston. According to Naalt (2005), signs of boredom such as general lack of enthusiasm, lack of satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, apathy and lack of interest are primarily the result of extramarital relationships. Bored people who are affected by extramarital relationships may feel that despite great efforts, they cannot achieve the desired result. They may become angry sooner than the normal state and feel that they have lost their sense of humor and the ability to have fun. Halston (1993) has provided a more comprehensive framework for the process of boredom. He regards boredom as a form of depression which results from the process of exhaustion. Some studies suggest that boredom grows within depression under certain circumstances. For example, bored people are affected by depression when depression is accompanied by feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. In many instances, depression is the result of extramarital relationships and the injury caused by extramarital relations (Cited in Baqeri, 2001).

On the other hand, Lin (2009) believes that to prevent the process of onset and continuation of marital boredom arising from extramarital relationships, cases such as setting a time for being together, finding common interests, emphasizing positive aspects, appreciating the spouse and accepting the differences and also talking about feelings and needs and not about judgments and criticisms and having diversity in daily programs should be included in the training program. All these cases have been raised in the training program presented in this study and have been discussed. In addition, triangulation of Bowen family system therapy was further used for this discussion since it seems that the spouse who has betrayed and has established extramarital relationships satisfies his/her needs using another way through entering a third person between himself/herself and his/her spouse and explaining these issues along with the debates about differentiation in training sessions seems to improve marital boredom among couples.

In the second research hypothesis, with respect to reduced mean score of the experimental group in the posttest, it is concluded that the difference between the two groups is significant in terms of family forgiveness. Hence, training based on Bowen family system therapy has been effective in family forgiveness and has led to its improvement in couples.

Findings of the present research are congruent with the results achieved by Daghighaleh, Asgari and Heidari (2012) who revealed that there is a significant relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction and happiness.

Findings of the present study are consistent with the results obtained by Patrick (2007; Miragine&Kordova, 2007; cited in Daghagheleh et al., 2012) and Finchman et al. (2004) who showed a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and intimacy with forgiveness. Findings of the studies by Brown and Phillips (2005), Freedman and Knupp (2008), Neff, Kirkpartkl and Rude (2007), DeSantis (2014), Chow (2007), DiBlasio and Benda (2008), McCullough and Witvliet (2002), Maltby, Day & Barber (2004), Enright and Fitzgibbons (2002), Gambaro, Enright, Baskin and Klatt (2008) and Witvliet, Ludwig and Vander Laan (2001) are also congruent with the results of this study indicating the effectiveness of the treatment based on Bowen's approach in family forgiveness.

In explaining this hypothesis, it can be stated that forgiveness as a positive interpersonal and social change is considered against the error that is placed in the interpersonal domain. Makinen (2004) has regarded forgiveness as an attempt to maintain love and trust in relationships and bring an end to harmful biases. According to what was said about family therapy training and the results obtained from this study, it can be explained that after training Bowen family system therapy, individuals reinforce the possibility that they have more control over their lives through increasing the knowledge, understanding of this issue, changing their attitude, deciding to forgive while increasing a sense of security, decreasing negative emotions and gradually eliminating the hatred that has turned into hostility and anger.

As previously mentioned, forgiveness is very important in families and extramarital relationships. Forgiving oneself and others can help individuals in facing the negative consequences of extramarital relationships and intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts and can facilitate psychological well-being and meaningful social relationships. With regard to these cases, it is clear that forgiveness has a strong cognitive component and is affected by individuals' attitudes towards themselves and others. Non-forgiveness of oneself and others leads to mental rumination and evokes depressive symptoms. Further, it has been revealed that some depressive symptoms associated with compassion and forgiveness including feelings of guilt, self-blame and most importantly suicidal thoughts and actions are further observed in depressed youths rather than depressed children and elderly people. Family system therapy based on Bowen's model reduces mental, interpersonal, intrapersonal, social and emotional injuries and thus increases forgiveness in individuals (Brown & Phillips, 2005).

Another explanation which is related to the approach of Freedman and Knupp indicates that the tendency to forgive others can protect the individual against negative interpersonal experiences and depression-related perceptions. Studies have demonstrated that people who do not forgive are more likely to become depressed (Freedman & Knupp, 2008). However, the causal direction of this phenomenon is not clear and it has been shown in some cases that individuals with a tendency for rumination about unpleasant and negative experiences of the past are less likely to forgive others and also are more likely to become depressed (Neff, Kirkpartkl & Rude, 2007). Besides, research has shown that depressed people quickly recall the harassment by others (DeSantis, 2014). They are also likely to interpret events in a negative and distorted way. These individuals tend to judge their social relations based on the past negative experiences (Chow, 2007).

Another explanation is based on the approach of McCullough and Witvliet. They (2002) have defined forgiveness as a motivational desire that leads people to avoiding unpleasant communication responses and behaving positively towards who has treated them negatively. Maltby, Day and Barber (2004) consider forgiveness as a positive adaptation process which is displayed by the release of hateful emotions, cognitions and behaviors towards the aggressor so that it develops compassion, generosity and satisfaction for that person. Gambaro, Enright, Baskin and Klatt (2008) observed that individuals who forgive more than others less report physical and mental health problems. Witvliet, Ludwig and Vander Laan (2001) argued that those who were trained to give the wrongdoer responses without forgiveness compared to people who have learned to provide responses along with forgiveness showed faster heart rate, higher blood pressure and more skin responses.

Overall, family system therapy based on Bowen's model causes to reduce marital boredom and increase family forgiveness through creating positive interpersonal experiences and correcting depression-related perceptions, reducing the tendency for rumination about unpleasant and negative experiences of the past, decreasing negative processing, reducing the rate of harassment by others in depressed individuals, reducing misjudgments about one's

social relations on the basis of past negative experiences, releasing positive emotions, cognitions and behaviors and having balanced relationships with others and the environment.

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