Reviewer’s report

Title: Marital communication skills training to promote marital satisfaction and psychological health during pregnancy: A couple focused approach

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Reviewer: Kelly Pickerill

Reviewer's report:

- Check grammar in abstract; spelling of 'summary' (p.3, Plain English summary)
- Lines 2-5: I think this sentence should be worded differently. If a woman is experiencing violence during her pregnancy, this is a larger issue than simply a reduction in the quality of the marital relationship.
- "These circumstances pave the way…” (p.4, line 5) - word choice Consider diction other than pave the way. Precipitate? Can lead to? "Pave the way" suggests psychological disorders are more frequent amongst pregnant women than perhaps they are.
- You reference negative impacts on pregnancy caused by psychological disorders (lines 6-8), such as low birth weight and pre-eclampsia. However the connection is not completely evident. Perhaps you could provide an example detailing some evidence of this.
- Check grammar line 7 it should read: …impacts on the pregnancy result and maternal and child health by increasing the risk…
- Lines 9-12: Moreover, with an increasing the risk of postpartum depression [8], these disorders develop their destruction trend to later stages of life and may be followed by social dilemmas such as the disruption of relations between spouses [2], increased risk of suicide [9] and the infant mortality [10]. Consider re-working this sentence; diction feels a bit awkward and the main point is unclear.
- Similarly, re-work lines 12-14 the main point is there, but the sentence structure is awkward.
- Line 21: remove 'the' before pregnancy.
- A question regarding the Methods—of the 97 women with a marital satisfaction score of less than 28, why were only 60 selected to continue participating in the study? Including an explanation or justification as to why this was the case would be helpful.
- Lines 37-38: grammar—"Thus, out of 169 participants, 97 had a marital satisfaction score of less than 28, of which, 60 pregnant women were randomly selected to continue the participating in the study.
- Lines 44-45: grammar—"The communication skills training package with a couple focused approach was developed and based on the books [12, 13] and the opinions of experts oin psychology, psychiatry and reproductive health”. Also, can you provide a few examples of which experts/opinions and why?
- Lines 46-47: "The communication skills training course was held in seven 2-hour sessions twice a week due to changes during the pregnancy for couples". Explain this idea further. It is currently unclear.
- Lines 47-48: grammar - "The training was made delivered as through lectures, group discussions, and role playing, and practicing the skills the skills learned were practiced under the supervision of a specialist in clinical psychology.
- Line 51: "restoring the appropriate communication" - I suggest reworking to, re-establish appropriate communication, or establish respectful communication.
- Line 55-56: grammar - "teaching the self-awareness and self-care skills, and assessing the communication barriers in them."
- Lines 57-61: I suggest explaining what these strategies are in more detail, and then explaining how they were used in the study.
- Tools section: Explain in more detail their scoring systems, and how this scoring is weighted?
- Discussion: There is significant emphasis on improving women's communication skills for increased marital satisfaction. However, in the methods section you discuss that their husbands also participated in this training. It is of course important for women to improve their communication skills, but women make up only one half of any marital relationship. Another key factor would be improving their male partners' communication skills as well. Was there any focus on this? If so, your discussion would be strengthened by speaking to this as well.
- Lines 129-131: Can you please elaborate on the idea "due to changes in gender roles, abnormal relationships may be experienced by the couples"? This idea was introduced but not explained, and feels under-developed.
- Lines 137-139: What do you mean by "periods of consolidation of communication skills"? Please explain in more detail.
- Lines 146-153: Explanation is a bit unclear. Please try re-writing to improve clarity.
- Please review correct grammar and punctuation is used throughout.

Overall I thought the principle underlying the study and intervention were very interesting, but the paper itself is lacking somewhat in terms of development. It would be strengthened by explaining the intervention activities in more detail (e.g., what kind of communication skills were learned, what kind of lecture topics were covered during the sessions, etc.), and the significance of those chosen. Further, while I think the focus on improving women's psychological health during pregnancy is beneficial, important, and very worthwhile, I also felt that there was not adequate explanation regarding the role of their partners. While I understand the objective was to improve levels of marital satisfaction amongst pregnant women, women make up only one half of any marital relationship, and I think speaking more to how their husbands played a role in these intervention activities would give more weight to the study intervention and activities.

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