



THE EFFECTS OF THE COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM ON THE DYSFUNCTIONAL ATTITUDES OF COUPLES

BİLİŞSEL-DAVRANIŞÇI EVLİLİK İLİŞKİSİNİ GELİŞTİRME PROGRAMININ ÇİFTLERİN FONKSİYONEL OLMAYAN TUTUMLARINA ETKİSİ

Melek KALKAN*, Ercümen ERSANLI**

ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral marriage enrichment program to decrease the level of the dysfunctional attitudes of the couples. Forty participants with dysfunctional attitudes determined by The Dysfunctional Attitude Scale were randomly chosen as experimental and control groups. The results of the covariance analysis indicate that there are significant differences between the dysfunctional attitudes levels of the subjects on the experimental and control groups. The cognitive-behavioral marriage enrichment program can be said to decrease the levels of dysfunctional attitude in couples significantly.

Keywords: marriage enrichment program, cognitive-behavioral approach, dysfunctional attitudes.

ÖZET: Bu çalışmanın amacı bilişsel-davranışçı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının çiftlerin fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlarına etkisini araştırmaktır. Fonksiyonel Olmayan Tutumlar Ölçeği kullanılarak belirlenen kırk katılımcı random yöntemiyle deney ve kontrol grubuna atanmıştır. Kovaryans analizi sonuçları deney ve kontrol grubundaki katılımcıların fonksiyonel olmayan tutumları arasında anlamlı fark olduğunu göstermektedir. Bilişsel-davranışçı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının çiftlerin fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlarını anlamlı ölçüde azalttığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programı, bilişsel-davranışçı yaklaşım, fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlar.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marital problems are serious public health problems. A number of studies have documented the negative psychological, social, and health consequences of marital problems (Waite & Gallegher 2000). Several researches indicate that individuals with high levels of disharmony in their marriages have a worse psychological and physical health in comparison with those sustaining a harmonious marriage, and they also claim that disharmony in marriage is significantly correlated with neurotic depression and tendency towards suicide (Birtchnell & Kennard, 1983a; Birtchnell & Kennard, 1983b; Coyne & DeLongis, 1986; Johnson & Jacob, 2000; Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Yıldırım, 2004; Fidanoglu, 2007). The researches conducted on the children of disharmonious couples reveal the fact that these children both have psychopathological problems of adjustment with respect to the other children (Bond & McMahon, 1984; Frick, 1993; Kim, 2001).

The researchers of marriage and family studying the causes of unsuccessful marriages emphasize that the beliefs and dysfunctional thoughts of the individuals on marriage are indicators of disharmony in marriage (Markman et al. 1988; Larsen & Olson, 1989; Bradbury, Fincham & Beach 2000; Sharp & Ganong, 2000). The emphasis put by Ellis on the role of irrational expectations in problematic marriages has urged the cognitive approach to direct its attention on marriage therapy. Cognitive approach focuses on how the individuals interpret the relationship (Ellis, 1986). According to this approach, the individuals have common irrational thoughts on themselves, their partners and marriages. The studies indicate that there is a significant correlation between the correlation of irrational and dysfunctional thoughts and low levels of marriage satisfaction and adjustment (Epstein & Eidelson, 1981; Huber & Milstein, 1985; Bradbury & Fincham, 1988; Möller & Zyl, 1991; Haferkamp, 1994; Cann et al. 2001; Flett et al. 2001; Stackert & Bursik, 2003). The similar studies in Turkey support the results of these studies. Results of a study conducted by Güven and Sevim (2007) on married individuals' perceptions toward interpersonal cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction showed that unrealistic relationship expectation, one of the cognitive distortions, predicts marriage satisfaction. Hamamcı (2005) investigated the association between

* Yrd. Doç. Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, mlkalkan@superonline.com

** Yrd. Doç. Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, eersanli@omu.edu.tr

dysfunctional relationship beliefs and marital adjustment and satisfaction of Turkish nonclinical married individuals. The results showed that dysfunctional relationship beliefs have negative correlation with the marital adjustment of males. The mind reading beliefs were positively associated with the marital satisfaction of females. A study by Akfırat (1995) showed that wives have causal attribution in low marital satisfaction in couples. Tutarel-Kışlak (1997) investigated the relation between marital satisfaction and attributions. The results indicated that negative attributions have positive correlation with the marital satisfaction. The improvement of the adjustment in a relationship or marriage requires transformation of the dysfunctional cognitions of the partners and cognitive restructuring (Baucom et al. 1990).

Problem solving contains the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills (Korkut, 2002). An effective way of changing the dysfunctional attitudes on marriage is “the family life education”. Presenting only seminars is not adequate in changing beliefs and attitudes on marriage. A content including activities and homework seems more appropriate and effective in changing the dysfunctional thoughts and irrational beliefs of the individuals (Sharp & Ganong, 2000). The preventive programs which are based on various psychological counseling or psychotherapy approaches occupy an important place in many public health practices, family practices, and counseling practices. In a study conducted on the effectiveness of marriage enrichment programs, it has been revealed that the individuals participating in these programs have shown an improvement in their marriages, and their problems have significantly decreased in comparison with those who have not participated in these programs (Jacobson & Addis, 1993). Furthermore, it is clear that the development of successful preventive interventions which address the common risk factors of marital distress and divorce have the potential to save personal, social, and economic costs implicitly (Duncan & Markman, 1988).

In this study, we have examined the effect of marriage enrichment program based on cognitive-behavioral approach on the dysfunctional attitudes of the couples. We have carried out the study in the light of the opinion that marriage therapies focused on cognitive restructuring may improve the relationships by changing the beliefs and expectations of the individuals about their partners and relationships significantly (Baucom et al. 1989; Haferkamp, 1994). Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of marriage enrichment program based on cognitive-behavioral approach to level of the dysfunctional attitudes of the couples.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

It was announced in various institutions in Samsun that a series of marriage enrichment program sessions to develop marital relationships of couples would be given at Ondokuz Mayıs University. The Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale was administered to each couple. Taking into account the results of the Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale, a study group of 40 people was formed. A control group consisting of 20 people and an experimental group consisting of 20 people were formed taking the scores of the couples from the scale into consideration.

For those in the experimental group the mean of the marriage duration was 12.60 years and the age range was between 27 and 45 years. The mean of those who were in the control group was 11.40 years and their ages ranged from 28 to 41 years. It was also noted that the individuals in both of the groups were either the graduates of high school or university.

2.2. Design of the study

In this empirical study which has been conducted in order to see the effects of a marriage enrichment program based on the cognitive behavioral approach on the dysfunctional attitudes of the couples, “pre-test and post-test control group design” has been used. The independent variable of the study is the marriage enrichment program and the dependent variable of the study is dysfunctional attitudes.

2.3. Procedures

The marriage enrichment program consisted of 2-hour sessions in 9 weeks. In the first session the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale was given as a pre-test and the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale was given to the control group at the same time as the experimental group. The experimental group attended to nine marriage

enrichment sessions; whereas the control group was not interfered during the same period. After nine weeks, the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale was given to the control and the experimental groups again as a post test.

The activities used in the sessions which are based on the cognitive-behavioral approach are given in Table 1.

Table 1: The Activities Included in The Marriage Enrichment Program

Session	Activities
I.	Group members meet each other; announcement of group rules; review of expectations from the group and marriage; emphasizing positive and negative sides of marriage.
II.	Informing about automatic opinions; exemplifying and sharing automatic opinions about marriage; homework.
III.	Informing about cognitive mistakes; exemplifying and sharing cognitive mistakes about marriage; homework.
IV.	Informing about A-B-C models; exemplifying A-B-C models about marriage; homework.
V.	Informing about irrational beliefs; handing out the list including the 12 irrational opinions of Ellis to the group members; reading the list together; discussing the opinions on unhappiness in marriage and on irrational relationship opinions; homework.
VI	Informing about the D and E models while presenting the A-B-C models in order to transform the irrational beliefs about relationships; informing about the self-help form prepared with regard to the A-B-C model; exemplifying the discussion started by adding the D and E models to the A-B-C models; homework.
VII.	Informing about I-Language and You-Language; exemplifying I-Language and You-Language within the context of marriage; homework.
VIII.	Informing about anger management; doing relaxation exercises; discussing, exemplifying and sharing irrational opinions leading to anger within the context of marriage; discussing irrational opinions leading to anger within the framework of A-B-C models; homework.
IX.	Evaluation of the process and group members by themselves; sharing emotions and opinions of the couples about the outcome of the program; conclusion of the session and the process.

2.4. Measures

The data have been gathered by the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (DAS). The original form of Dysfunctional Attitude Scale has been developed by Weissman and Beck in 1978. The scale has been translated into Turkish and its reliability and validity study were examined by Şahin and Şahin in 1992. It contains 40 items. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the scale is .79. Computed split half reliability coefficient is .72. The scale correlates .19 with the Beck Depression Inventory, and .29 with the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (Şahin & Şahin, 1992).

2.5. Data Analysis

Pre- and post-test scores of control and experimental groups in the Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale have been designed so as to test the hypothesis of the research and, additionally, the covariance analysis has been conducted. The statistical analyses have been done by SPSS.

3. RESULTS

The mean and the standard deviation of dysfunctional attitudes scores of the participants in the control and experimental groups are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Dysfunctional Attitude Levels of the Experimental and Control Group

Experimental group (N=20)				Control group (N=20)			
Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
210.05	32.03	120.40	56.37	200.05	28.77	198.95	18.15

The results of the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale applied to the experimental and control groups reveal no significant differences in dysfunctional attitude levels (pre-test experimental group= 210.05±32.03, pre-test control group= 200.05±28.77, $p>.05$).

The covariance analysis has been applied to the dysfunctional attitude scores of the subjects and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The Results of Covariance Analysis of Dysfunctional Attitudes of the Subjects

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Group	75549.042	1	75549.042	81.686	.000
Pre-test	32433.611	1	32433.611	35.068	.000
Error	34220.139	37	924.869		
Total	1148199.000	40			

The results of the covariance analysis in Table 3 indicate that the difference between the mean scores of the participants of the experimental and control groups in pre- and post-tests in terms of level of dysfunctional attitudes is significant at the level of .001. According to this, the marriage enrichment program based on the cognitive behavioral approach on dysfunctional attitudes of couples enhances marital adjustment level of couples significantly. This result verifies the hypothesis of the study.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate marriage enrichment program based on cognitive-behavioral approach for couples with dysfunctional attitudes. In this study, the pre- and post-tests have been given to the experimental and control groups. The sessions lasted for 9 weeks with the experimental group. The results of the covariance analysis indicate the significant differences between the dysfunctional attitudes of the couples in the experimental and control groups. This finding reveals that the marriage enrichment program based on cognitive-behavioral approach decreases the dysfunctional attitudes level of couples significantly. This study supports the opinion that marriage enrichment programs are effective for the treatment of couples with dysfunctional attitudes.

Several studies provide promising results through cognitive-behavioral techniques in marriage enrichment program for couples. Seventeen couples with irrational beliefs were treated in six group sessions using cognitive-behavioral techniques. Results suggested that the program was an effective intervention for couples with irrational beliefs (Huber & Milstein, 1985). In a research conducted by Baucom, Sayers & Sher (1990), Behavioral Marriage therapy was united with Cognitive Reconstruction Training and Expression of Feelings Training and was applied to couples whose marital adjustment was low. The results show that the marriage enrichment program is an effective intervention. A study by Dandeneau and Johnson (1994) showed that couples' levels of closeness and adjustment increased as a result of cognitive-behavioral interventions. More recently, Ersanlı (2007) has investigated the effectiveness of the marriage enrichment program based on the cognitive-behavioral approach on decreasing the level of the irrational beliefs of couples. These studies indicate that the cognitive-behavioral marriage enrichment program has decreased the level of irrational relationship beliefs of couples significantly.

It is seen that the activities developed in the Marriage Enrichment Program based on cognitive-behavioral approach aim at cognitive and behavioral restructuring through changes in individuals' thoughts and behavior. It is believed that gaining new behavior, correcting faulty learning and also changing the

irrational beliefs with rational ones may contribute to the decrease in the level of dysfunctional attitudes of couples.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, in this study, a pre-test, post-test design has been applied without follow-up. Future studies involving such a follow-up would be more informative about the effectiveness of the marriage enrichment program based on cognitive-behavioral approach for couples with dysfunctional attitudes. Secondly, the data have been collected from relatively well-educated participants. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to couples with no higher education. The properties of the program may be investigated in further studies by collecting data from couples with lower educational backgrounds. Finally, the results of this study need to be replicated with much larger samples in order to test these initial outcomes. If studies produce similar findings, then implications could be pursued to provide guides for family physicians, therapists and counselors.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The marriage enrichment program based on the cognitive behavioral approach on dysfunctional attitudes of couples enhances marital adjustment level of couples significantly. The implications for public health workers, family practitioners, clinicians, counselors, educators and researchers can be derived from the findings of this study. This study may help family practitioners and counselors in order to provide training program and to plan appropriate intervention programs at public health centers and psychological counseling centers.

REFERENCES

- Akfiyat, F. (1995). Çalışan ve çalışmayan kadınlarla eşlerinin nedensellik ve sorumluluk yüklemeleri ve evlilik doyumları [The causal and responsibility attribution and marital satisfaction of working and non-working women]. Unpublished master thesis, Ankara University, Ankara.
- Baucom, D.H., Epstein, N., Sayers, S.L & Sher, T.G. (1989). The role of cognitions in marital relationships: Definitional, methodological, and conceptual issues. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57(1), 31-38.
- Baucom, D.H, Sayers, S.L ve Sher, T.G. (1990). Supplementing behavioral marital therapy with cognitive restructuring and emotional expressiveness training: An outcome investigation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 58(5), 636-645.
- Birtchnell, J. & Kennard, J. (1983a). Does marital maladjustment lead to mental illness? *Social Psychiatry*, 18, 79-88.
- Birtchnell, J. & Kennard, J. (1983b). Marriage and mental illness. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 142, 193-198.
- Bond, C.R. & McMahon, R.J. (1984). Relationships between marital distress and child behavior problems, maternal personal adjustment, maternal personality and maternal parenting behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 93, 348-351.
- Bradbury, T.N. & Fincham, F.D. (1988). Individual difference variables in close relationships: A contextual model of marriage as an integrative framework. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 713-721.
- Bradbury, N.B. Fincham, F.D. & Beach, S.R. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage And The Family*, 62, 964-980.
- Cann, A., Mangum, J.L & Wells, M. (2001). Distress in response to relationship infidelity: The roles of gender and attitudes about relationships. *Journal of Sex Research*, 38(3), 185-190.
- Coyne, J.C. & DeLongis, A. (1986). Going beyond social support: the role of social relationships in adaptation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 54, 454-460.
- Dandeneau, M.L. & Johnson, S.M. (1994). Facilitating Intimacy: Interventions and effects, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 20(1), 17-33.
- Duncan, S.W & Markman, H.J. (1988). Intervention programs and the transition to parenthood. In G. Y. Michaels & W. A. Goldberg (Eds.) *The transition to parenthood: Current theory and research*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, A. (1986). Rational-emotive therapy applied to relationship therapy. *Journal of Rational-Emotive Therapy*, 4, 4-12.
- Epstein, N. & Eidelson, R.J. (1981). Unrealistic beliefs of clinical couples: Their relationship to expectations, goals, and satisfaction. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 9(4), 13-22.
- Flett, G.L., Hewitt, P.L., Shapir, B. ve Rayman, J. (2001). Perfectionism, beliefs, and adjustment in dating relationships. *Current Psychology*, 20(4), 289-311.
- Ersanlı, E. (2007). *Evlilik ilişkilerinde eşlerin akılcı olmayan inançlarıyla başetmelerinde bilişsel davranışçı yaklaşıma dayalı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının etkisi [The effect of the marital enrichment program based on cognitive-behavioral approach on the irrational relationship beliefs of couples]*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun.

- Fidanoğlu, O. (2007). *Evlilik uyumu ile eşlerin somatizasyon düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki ve diğer sosyodemografik değişkenler açısından karşılaştırılması* [The relationship of marital adjustment with somatization level and comparison of the study variables with other socio-demographic factors], Unpublished master thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul.
- Frick, P.J. (1993). Childhood conduct problems in a family context. *School Psychology Review*, 223, 376-385.
- Haferkamp, C.J. (1994). Dysfunctional beliefs, self-monitoring, and marital conflict. *Current Psychology*, 13(3), 248-262.
- Huber, C.H. & Milstein, B. (1985). Cognitive restructuring and a collaborative set in couples' work. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 13(2), 17-27.
- Gottman, J.M. & Notarius, C.I. (2002). Marital research in the 20th century and a research agenda for the 21st century. *Family Process*, 41(2), 159-197.
- Güven, N. & Sevim, S. A. (2007). İlişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalar ve algılanan problem çözme becerilerinin evlilik doyumunu yordama gücü [The prediction power of interpersonal cognitive distortions and the perceived marital problem solving skills for marital satisfaction]. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 28(3), 49-61.
- Hamamcı, Z. (2005). Dysfunctional relationship belief in marital satisfaction and adjustment. *Social Behavior And Personality*, 33(4), 313-328.
- Jacobson, N.S. & Addis, M.E. (1993). Research on couples and couple therapy: What do we know? Where are we going?. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61(1), 85-93.
- Johnson, S.L. ve Jacob, T. (2000). Sequential interactions in the marital communication of depressed men and women. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 68(1), 4-12.
- Kim, M. (2001). *Marital conflict parent-child interaction and children's social adjustment: an examination of mexican-american families*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of California.
- Korkut, F. (2002). Lise öğrencilerinin problem çözme becerileri [Problem solving skills of high school students]. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 22, 177-184.
- Larsen, A.S. & Olson, D.H. (1989). Predicting marital satisfaction using prepare: A replication study. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 15(3), 311-322.
- Markman, H.J., Floyd, F.J., Stanley, S.M & Storaasli, R.D. (1988). Prevention of marital distress: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, 56(2), 210-217.
- Möller, A.T. ve Zyi, P.D.V. (1991). Relationship beliefs, interpersonal perception, and marital adjustment. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 47, 28-33.
- Stackert, R.A. ve Bursik, K. (2003). Why I unsatisfied? Adult attachment style, gendered irrational relationship beliefs, and young adult romantic relationship satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34, 1419-1429.
- Şahin, N. & Şahin, N. (1992). How dysfunctional are the dysfunctional attitudes in another culture. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 65, 17-26.
- Tutarel-Kışlak, Ş. (1997). Evlilik uyumu ile nedensellik ve sorumluluk yüklemeleri arasındaki ilişkiler [The relationship of marital adjustment with responsibility and causal attributions]. *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi*, 12, 55-64.
- Yıldırım, İ. (2004). Eş destek ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi [Development of spouse support scale]. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 22(3), 19-26.
- Waite, L.J. & Gallager, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. New York: Doubleday.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Evlilik sorunları çok ciddi halk sağlığı sorunlarından. Araştırmalar bu sorunların psikolojik, sosyal ve sağlık açısından olumsuz sonuçlarını ortaya koymaktadır (Waite ve Gallegher 2000). Evlilik uyumsuzluğu yüksek bireylerin ruhsal ve bedensel sağlık durumlarının, uyumlu evliliğe sahip bireylerden daha kötü olduğu görülürken, evlilik ilişkilerindeki uyumsuzluğun nörotik depresyon ve intihar eğilimi ile anlamlı düzeyde ilişkili olduğu açıkça ortadadır (Birtchnell ve Kennard 1983a; Birtchnell ve Kennard 1983b; Coyne ve DeLongis 1986; Johnson & Jacob 2000; Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Yıldırım 2004; Fidanoğlu 2007). Evliliklerinde uyumsuzluk yaşayan çiftlerin çocukları üzerinde yapılan araştırmalar da, bu çocukların davranış problemleri yaşadıklarını ve diğer çocuklara göre daha uyumsuz olduklarını göstermektedir (Bond ve McMahon 1984; Frick 1993; Kim 2001).

Başarısız evliliklerin nedenlerini araştıran evlilik ve aile araştırmacıları, bireylerin evlilik ilişkilerine yönelik inançlarının ve fonksiyonel olmayan düşüncelerinin evlilikteki uyumsuzlukların işaretleri olduğunu göstermektedir (Markman ve ark. 1988; Larsen ve Olson 1989; Sharp ve Ganong 2000). Ellis'in, sorunlu evlilik ilişkilerinde akılcı olmayan beklentilerin rolünü vurgulaması, bilişsel yaklaşımların da dikkatini evlilik terapisine çevirmesine sebep olmuştur. Bilişsel yaklaşımlar bireylerin ilişki gerçeğini nasıl yorumladıklarına odaklanır (Ellis 1986). Bu yaklaşıma göre, bireylerin kendileri, partnerleri veya ilişkileri

hakkında yaygın akılcı olmayan inançları vardır; araştırmalar akılcı ve fonksiyonel olmayan inançların fazlalığı ile evlilik doyumu ve uyumundaki düşüklük arasında anlamlı ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir (Epstein ve Eidelson 1981; Huber ve Milstein 1985; Bradbury ve Fincham 1988; Möller ve Zyı 1991; Haferkamp 1994; Cann ve ark. 2001; Flett ve ark. 2001). İlişkideki ve evlilikteki uyumu artırmak, eşlerin fonksiyonel olmayan bilişlerini değiştirmeyi, bilişsel yeniden yapılandırmayı gerektirmektedir (Baucom ve ark. 1990).

Evliliğe ilişkin fonksiyonel olmayan inançları değiştirmenin etkili bir yolu “aile yaşam eğitimi”dir. Bu eğitimlerde seminerler şeklinde bilgi vermek, evlilik inançlarını ve tutumlarını değiştirmede tek başına etkili değildir; aktiviteler ve ödevlendirmelerle bütünleşmiş bir içerik, bireylerin fonksiyonel olmayan inançlarını ve tutumlarını değiştirmede daha uygun ve etkili görünmektedir (Sharp ve Ganong 2000). Evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programlarının etkililiği üzerine yapılan bir araştırma, bu programa katılan bireylerin katılmayanlara göre evlilik ilişkilerinde olumlu bir gelişme kaydettiği ve sorunlarının önemli ölçüde azaldığını göstermektedir (Jacobson ve Addis 1993). Bu sebeple, bu çalışmanın amacı bilişsel-davranışçı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının çiftlerin fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlarına etkisini araştırmaktır.

Bilişsel-davranışçı yaklaşıma dayalı olarak geliştirilmiş evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının evli çiftlerin fonksiyonel olmayan tutumları üzerine etkisini belirlemeye yönelik yapılan bu deneysel araştırmada, “Ön-test ve Son-test Kontrol Grup Deseni” kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın bağımsız değişkeni evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programı, bağımlı değişkeni ise fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlardır. Araştırma, 20 kişiden oluşan deney grubu ve 20 kişiden oluşan kontrol grubu katılımcıları üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma verilerinin toplanmasında, orijinali Weissman ve Beck (1978) tarafından geliştirilen, Şahin ve Şahin (1992) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan Fonksiyonel Olmayan Tutumlar Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Evlilik İlişkisini Geliştirme Programı 9 hafta boyunca yaklaşık 2,5 saatlik oturumlar şeklinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. İlk oturumda ön-test olarak Fonksiyonel Olmayan Tutumlar Ölçeği uygulanmış, deney grubuyla aynı tarihte kontrol grubuna da Fonksiyonel Olmayan Tutumlar Ölçeği verilmiştir. Deney grubu dokuz oturumluk evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programına katılmış; kontrol grubuna dokuz hafta içerisinde hiçbir müdahalede bulunulmamıştır. Dokuz hafta sonunda deney ve kontrol gruplarına son-test olarak Fonksiyonel Olmayan Tutumlar Ölçeği tekrar uygulanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde kovaryans analizi kullanılmıştır.

Araştırma bulguları deney ve kontrol grubundaki çiftlerin ön-test puanları arasında anlamlı bir fark olmadığını gösterirken, kovaryans analizi sonuçları deney grubundaki çiftlerin fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlarının son-testte anlamlı ölçüde azaldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Buna göre, bilişsel-davranışçı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının evli çiftlerin fonksiyonel olmayan tutumlarını anlamlı düzeyde azalttığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Bilişsel-davranışçı tekniklerin kullanıldığı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının etkililiğinin test edildiği bazı araştırmalarda da benzer sonuçlar elde edilmiştir. Huber ve Milstein (1985), eşlerin sahip olduğu gerçekdışı inançları değiştirmek için bir program düzenlemişler ve bu programın sonunda deney grubundaki eşlerin ilişkilerini geliştirme isteklerinin ve evlilik doyum düzeylerinin arttığını gözlemlemişlerdir. Baucom, Sayers ve Sher (1990)’ın yaptığı araştırmada davranışsal evlilik terapisi, bilişsel yeniden yapılandırma ve duyguların açılması eğitimi ile birleştirilerek evlilik uyumu düşük çiftlere uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının etkililiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Dandeneau ve Johnson (1994)’ın yaptığı araştırma da bilişsel-davranışçı müdahalenin çiftlerin yakınlık ve uyum düzeylerini artırdığını göstermektedir. Ersanlı (2007)’nin bilişsel-davranışçı evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programının çiftlerin akılcı olmayan inançlarına etkisini test ettiği araştırmada da deney grubu lehine anlamlı sonuçlar ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bilişsel-davranışçı yaklaşıma dayalı olarak geliştirilen evlilik ilişkisini geliştirme programında ele alınan etkinliklerin, bireylerin düşünce ve davranışlarında değişikliğe giderek, bilişsel ve davranışsal yeniden yapılandırmayı amaçladığı görülmektedir. Programda yer alan bu etkinliklerin, benzer araştırmalarda da görüldüğü gibi, fonksiyonel olmayan tutumların azalmasına anlamlı katkı sağladığı düşünülmektedir. Araştırmanın sonuçları psikolojik danışmanlar, psikologlar, aile ve evlilik danışmanları ve terapistleri için uygulanabilir olup, çiftlerle yapılacak çalışmalarda ve planlanacak müdahalelerde yararlı olacağı düşünülmektedir.