

# Effectiveness of a Family Counseling Program Based on Effective Dialogue Skills in Reducing Marital Silence Among Palestinian Women

Khitam A. Shiekh Khalil (Corresponding author)  
Faculty of education, Psychology Department, Al Aqsa University  
E-mail: [anna.smith@ncu.ca](mailto:anna.smith@ncu.ca)

Prof. Dr Yasera Abo Hadrous  
Faculty of education, Psychology Department, Al Aqsa University  
E-mail: [xinzhou.song@pku.edu.cn](mailto:xinzhou.song@pku.edu.cn)

## Abstract

The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of a family counseling program based on Effective dialogue skills in reducing marital silence among Palestinian women. The researchers employed a quasi-experimental design with two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The study sample comprised (30) participants, with (15) participants in each group.

The researchers utilized a self-developed Marital Silence Scale alongside an adapted Family Counseling Program designed by the researchers.

The results revealed statistically significant differences at a significance level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of individuals in the experimental and control groups on both the Marital Silence Scale in favor of the experimental group. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were found at a significance level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of individuals in the experimental group pre and post-intervention on Marital Silence Scale in favor of the post-intervention assessment.

The researchers recommends continuous support for individuals and couples after the completion of the counseling program through regular follow-up sessions or practical workshops. These sessions can be utilized to reinforce the concepts and skills learned during the program and guide individuals in applying them in their daily lives.

**Keywords:** Effective Dialogue skills, Family counseling program, Marital silence

**DOI:** 10.7176/JEP/15-12-07

**Publication date:** December 30th 2024

## Introduction

Families undergo a process of tension and strain due to various surrounding circumstances, such as economic and social conditions, which are prevalent in the Arab community, especially in Palestine. These conditions sometimes lead to many problems that threaten the fabric of the family, create discord between spouses, and threaten the stability of the family, contributing to its fragmentation. One of the prominent issues arising from these conflicts is marital silence, which refers to the failure of communication between spouses at home in many situations. This failure is not due to a lack of language knowledge or a functional defect in speech organs (Al-Jundi & Abu Zneid, 2017). Many Palestinian families experience this issue after a period of marriage, especially in Arab families, due to several obstacles (economic, psychological, and social) that hinder the achievement of their familial aspirations and needs. Marital silence is thus considered one of the challenges that marital life may face at some point. At times, it is both a cause and a result of the rapid social changes and civilizational development that have altered the roles and functions of families and spouses, with shifting roles often driven by the economic situation within the family. Therefore, family counseling has become of great importance to help families resolve their issues and provide support (Al-Jundi & Abu Zneid, 2017).

Furthermore, numerous studies focusing on couples, families, and divorce have found that success in family cohesion and psychological and social reassurance heavily relies on marital communication as a foundation for building a strong relationship between spouses and ensuring the continuity of married life. Studies such as Bornstein & Bornstein (1986) have confirmed this fact, pointing out that poor communication between spouses leads to many problems that may be difficult for them to resolve easily, as communication involves a mutual exchange on many matters. Since the nature of emotional interaction and communication between spouses is a crucial factor in overcoming marital problems, including the issue of marital silence (Ghasiri, 2013).

Additionally, marital compatibility is considered a cornerstone of a successful marriage, through good treatment between spouses, a healthy lifestyle, and appropriate psychological and social interaction. Achieving the desire for marriage in suitable ways ensures good mental health, while the absence of such a desire may lead to failure, strained marital relationships, and many psychological and social problems, including marital silence (Makhtoub, 2014). The better the communication between spouses, the more it contributes to improving the quality of the marital relationship and reducing conflicts and marital issues, including the problem of marital silence.

To address the issue of marital silence and improve family harmony, the present study aimed to develop a measure to diagnose marital silence and reduce its severity. Based on this, solutions to the problem were proposed through a family counseling program that focuses on effective communication skills, which was developed by the researcher. This program is designed to achieve positive outcomes on various levels—intellectual, emotional, and psychological. The current study sees marital communication as the foundation for building family cohesion, achieving positive communication between spouses, and ensuring the continuity of married life. This, in turn, positively affects feelings of satisfaction, happiness, and improved family quality of life, which leads to proper family harmony.

The family counseling program consists of several counseling sessions that cover various aspects, including purposeful and effective dialogue, several skills for positive and good communication between spouses and family members, decision-making participation, sharing responsibilities, and providing basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, and healthcare, in addition to addressing cultural, social, and emotional factors.

Reducing the severity of marital silence and improving family quality of life contributes to enhancing the mental and physical well-being of family members, which in turn improves social life and society in general.

### **Study Problem and Questions**

Upon reviewing the marriage and divorce records from the Marital Counseling Office at the Sharia Court and reports from the Supreme Council for Sharia Judiciary, it became evident that various issues lead to divorce, among them the problem of marital silence. For example, according to the annual report of the Supreme Council for Sharia Judiciary in Gaza (2022), there were 1,439 divorce cases, representing 18.8% of the total 6,979 marriage cases. Based on the researcher's observations during field training at the Beach Center of the UNRWA from October 17, 2022, to January 2, 2023, it was found that most of the women visiting the center suffered from marital problems, including marital silence.

Given these concerning figures, the researcher hypothesized that the high divorce rates might be partly attributed to family problems, including marital silence. Accordingly, the researcher identified the main study problem as follows:

What is the effectiveness of a family counseling program based on effective dialogue skills in reducing marital silence among Palestinian women?

The following sub-questions were derived from this main question:

1. Are there statistically significant differences between the mean ranks of the experimental and control groups in the post-test measurement on the marital silence scale?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between the mean ranks of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test measurements on the marital silence scale?
3. Are there statistically significant differences between the mean ranks of the experimental group in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale?

### **Study Hypotheses:**

1. There are no statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05 ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the mean ranks of the experimental and control groups in the post-test measurement on the marital silence scale in favor of the experimental group.

2. There are no statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05 ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the mean ranks of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test measurements on the marital silence scale in favor of the post-test.
3. There are no statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05 ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the mean ranks of the experimental group in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale.

#### **Study Objectives:**

1. To identify the effectiveness of a family counseling program based on effective dialogue skills in reducing marital silence among Palestinian women in Gaza.
2. To reveal the differences between the mean ranks of the experimental and control groups in the post-test measurement on the marital silence scale.
3. To reveal the differences between the mean ranks of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test measurements on the marital silence scale.
4. To reveal the differences between the mean ranks of the experimental group in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale.

#### **Study Significance:**

**Theoretical Significance:** This study contributes to enriching knowledge in the field of family psychological counseling by providing a deeper understanding of reducing marital silence and emphasizing the importance of effective dialogue skills. This knowledge can enable researchers and specialists to develop related psychological theories and models. It also provides new insights into the effects of marital silence on the continuity of married life and its broader societal implications.

**Practical Significance:** Practically, the study offers a counseling program based on effective dialogue skills that can help reduce marital silence among married women in Gaza. The study also provides a tool to measure marital silence, enabling researchers and specialists to evaluate the effectiveness of future family counseling programs and interventions. Moreover, the study can contribute to the development of group and individual counseling programs, promote effective dialogue, and improve marital relationships.

#### **Study Limits and Boundaries:**

1. **Human Boundaries:** The study was applied to Palestinian women in the Gaza Governorate.
2. **Geographical Boundaries:** The study was conducted at one of the institutions affiliated with the Dar Al-Huda Association for Child Care in the Gaza Governorate.
3. **Temporal Boundaries:** The study was implemented during the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year.
4. **Conceptual Boundaries:** The study was conducted according to the terms and concepts related to it, such as marital silence and effective dialogue skills.
5. **Procedural Boundaries:** A quasi-experimental methodology was employed, using a family counseling program.

#### **Study Design and Methodology:**

Given the nature of this study and the information intended to be obtained, as well as to achieve the objectives with accuracy and objectivity, the researcher employed the quasi-experimental method based on two groups: an experimental group and a control group. This method seeks to assess the effectiveness of a family counseling program based on effective dialogue skills in reducing marital silence among Palestinian women. The study was conducted through multiple assessments: pretest, posttest, and follow-up measurements.

### **Study Population:**

The study population consisted of all married women in the Gaza Governorate, which totals over 100,000 women, according to the records of the Sharia courts in Gaza for the year 2023-2024.

### **Study Sample:**

A purposive random sample was chosen from married women in the Gaza Governorate who were subjected to the research.

- **Exploratory Sample:** The exploratory sample consisted of 40 women from the original population, separate from the primary study sample (experimental and control groups). This sample was selected randomly, and the research tools were applied to it to verify their validity, reliability, and psychometric properties, ensuring their suitability for application in the current experimental study and alignment with the Palestinian culture.
- **Primary Sample:** The primary study sample comprised 150 married women, selected from the original population of over 100,000. The researcher distributed the measurement tool across the three Sharia courts in Gaza (Gaza Court, Sheikh Radwan Court, Shujaiya Court) to ensure a well-distributed sample representing the different regions of Gaza. After applying the marital silence and family quality of life scales, the researcher selected 30 women who scored the highest on both scales.

Before finalizing the two groups (experimental and control), the researcher excluded married women who had circumstances preventing them from attending or committing to the program sessions. An introductory meeting was held to explain the program, its procedures, and the time frame, allowing each woman to decide whether to join the program and commit to its sessions. This step created a positive impression among the participants, motivating them to cooperate and attend regularly.

The researcher divided the 30 participants into two groups:

- **Experimental Group:** 15 participants.
- **Control Group:** 15 participants.

Before starting the experiment, the researcher ensured parity and homogeneity between the two groups in terms of variables such as age, years of marriage, economic level, educational level, and scores on the marital silence and family quality of life scales. This process is detailed after presenting the study tools.

### **Study Tools:**

After reviewing the theoretical literature and relevant studies on the topic of marital silence (such as the studies by Al-Hurtani, 2023; Al-Qarata, 2022; Mohammed, 2021; Al-Turki, 2019; Al-Baz, 2019; Al-Jundi and Abu Zneid, 2017), and studies on family quality of life (such as Abu Bakr and Al-Rashid, 2019; Al-Fawzan, 2020; Abdul-Majeed, 2019; Eid, 2018; and Dahir, 2018), the researcher designed the study tools as follows:

#### **Marital Silence Questionnaire (prepared by the researcher):**

**Description of the Marital Silence Scale:** The final scale consists of 24 items distributed across four sub-dimensions:

1. **Difficulty in understanding and communicating between spouses:** Refers to both parties' difficulty in understanding each other and the absence of a common communication channel, resulting in constant conflict.
2. **Routine in marital life:** Refers to the relatively static relationships within the family, where circumstances rarely change, leading to neglect between spouses and a formal, routine relationship.
3. **Difficulty in expressing emotions:** Refers to each party's inability to express their emotions, thoughts,

beliefs, and attitudes toward the other.

4. **Avoidance of problems:** Refers to both parties avoiding discussions about life's social problems, challenges in raising children, and failing to find solutions.

#### Scoring the Marital Silence Scale:

- **Scale Validity:** The scale was reviewed by 11 specialists from the faculties of counseling and mental health in Palestinian and Arab universities. The evaluation by these experts is detailed in Appendix 6. After incorporating their feedback, the final version of the scale consists of 24 items across four dimensions (difficulty in understanding and communicating, routine in life, difficulty in expressing emotions, and avoidance of problems). Each item was assigned a weight according to a five-point Likert scale (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never), with the following weights (5, 4, 3, 2, 1). The scores for the study sample ranged from 24 to 120, as detailed in Appendix 4.

#### Internal Consistency Validity:

The researcher confirmed the internal consistency of the marital silence scale by calculating its internal validity and using the extreme group comparison method. The correlation coefficients between the items and the total score for each dimension were also calculated, and the results are presented in the following table.

Table (1) Correlation Coefficient of Dimension Items with the Total Score of the Dimension

item	Corr.	Sig.	item	Corr.	Sig.
<b>Difficulty in understanding and communicating</b>			<b>Difficulty in expressing emotions</b>		
1	0.685	**0.000	14	0.820	**0.000
2	0.660	**0.000	15	0.889	**0.000
3	0.716	**0.000	16	0.860	**0.000
4	0.849	**0.000	17	0.744	**0.000
5	0.749	**0.000	18	0.850	**0.000
6	0.685	**0.000	19	0.854	**0.000
7	0.822	**0.000	item	Corr.	Sig.
8	0.811	**0.000	<b>Avoidance of problems</b>		
<b>Routine in marital life:</b>			item	Corr.	Sig.
9	0.733	**0.000	20	0.866	**0.000
10	0.735	**0.000	21	0.873	**0.000
11	0.867	**0.000	22	0.568	**0.000
12	0.767	**0.000	23	0.851	**0.000
13	0.820	**0.000	24	0.880	**0.000

It is evident from the previous table that the correlation coefficients of each item with the total score of the dimension it belongs to were statistically significant at a significance level of (0.000). The coefficients ranged between (0.568 and 0.889), indicating the internal consistency and coherence among the items of the scale, serving as an indicator of construct validity in measuring marital silence.

#### Calculation of the Correlation of Each Dimension with the Total Score of the Scale

The researcher calculated the correlation of each dimension with the total score of the scale, and obtained the results shown in the following table:

**Table (2): Correlation of Each Dimension with the Total Score of the Scale**

	Marital silence items	No.	items	Corr.	Sig.
.1	Difficulty in understanding and communicating	8	1-8	0.940	**0.000
.2	Routine life	5	9-13	0.944	**0.000
.3	Difficulty in expressing emotions	6	14-19	0.931	**0.000
.4	Avoidance of problems	5	20-24	0.942	**0.000

It is evident from the previous table that all correlation coefficients for the dimensions of the marital silence scale were strong and statistically significant at a significance level of (0.000), with values of (0.940, 0.944, 0.931, 0.942). This confirms the internal consistency and coherence of the scale as an indicator of construct validity in measuring marital silence.

### Scale Reliability

The researcher conducted a reliability test for the marital silence scale using the internal consistency method with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the split-half method using the Spearman-Brown coefficient.

### Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

The reliability of the marital silence scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

**Table (3): Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient**

Marital Silence Dimensions	Number of Items	Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
1. Difficulty in understanding and communication	8	1-8	0.887
2. Life routine	5	9-13	0.845
3. Difficulty expressing emotions	6	14-19	0.914
4. Avoidance of problems	5	20-24	0.870
Total Scale	24	1-24	0.965

It is evident from the previous table that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the dimensions of the marital silence scale were (0.887, 0.845, 0.914, 0.870), respectively. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the marital silence scale was (0.965), which is a strong indicator of the scale's reliability, confirming that the marital silence scale has strong reliability and is valid for application in the study.

### Split-Half Reliability

The reliability of the marital silence scale was also calculated using the split-half method, which involves dividing the scale items into two halves, as shown in the following table:

**Table (4): Split-Half Reliability of the Marital Silence Scale**

Correlation Between the Two Halves	0.870
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	0.930
Guttman Formula	0.922

It is evident from the previous table that the correlation coefficient between the two halves of the marital silence scale reached (0.870), indicating a high correlation between the two halves. When applied to the length correction formula for Spearman-Brown, the reliability of the scale was (0.930), and when applied to the Guttman formula, it was (0.922). This indicates that the marital silence scale is reliable and can be applied.

## Results and discussion

**Hypothesis 1: (There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post-measurement on the Marital Silence Scale.)**

To test the validity of this hypothesis, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the scale used. Then, the researcher applied the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test and compared the differences between the mean scores of the two groups. The following table presents the results obtained by the researcher regarding the significance of the differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the Marital Silence Scale.

**Table (5): Mann-Whitney Test for the Experimental and Control Groups on the Marital Silence Scale**

domain	Group	No.	Mean	Rank Mean	Sum of Rank	U Value	Z value	Sig.
Difficulty in understanding and communication	experimental	15	19.93	8.70	130.50	10.500	4.242-	**0.000
	control	15	29.66	22.30	334.50			
Routine life	experimental	15	15.53	11.73	176.00	56.00	2.364-	**0.018
	control	15	19.40	19.27	289.00			
Difficulty expressing emotions	experimental	15	16.68	10.20	153.00	33.00	3.316-	**0.001
	control	15	22.33	20.80	312.00			
Avoidance of problems	experimental	15	11.60	9.47	142.00	22.00	3.779-	**0.000
	control	15	18.46	21.53	323.00			
Total scale	experimental	15	63.93	8.07	121.00	01.000	4.630-	**0.000
	control	15	89.86	22.93	344.00			

The previous table (5) shows the presence of differences between the mean scores obtained by the experimental group compared to their peers in the control group on the Marital Silence Scale. The "Z" values between the experimental and control groups were (-4.242), (-2.364), (-3.316), (-3.779), and (-4.630) respectively, favoring the experimental group. This indicates the effectiveness of the counseling program and its positive impact on the married women in the experimental group compared to the control group.

The results from the previous table show the presence of statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the Marital Silence Scale. The negative "Z" values indicate that the mean scores of the experimental group are higher than those of the control group. This is attributed to the effectiveness of the family counseling program and its positive impact on the participants in the experimental group.

These results could be due to the family counseling program, which provided the participants in the experimental group with a range of skills, knowledge, and psychological support, contributing to a reduction in marital silence. The program may have helped enhance effective communication and foster a better understanding of marital relationships, thus improving the quality of family life. The negative "Z" values indicate that the experimental group achieved significantly better results compared to the control group. The results demonstrate that the family counseling program had a noticeable positive impact on the participants in the experimental group, reflecting its effectiveness in reducing marital silence and improving their marital quality of life.

According to the researcher, this effect is attributed to the knowledge and skills acquired by the participants in the experimental group during the family counseling program sessions. The information was presented gradually and in a simplified manner, particularly regarding the family counseling program related to marital silence, its impact on family life quality, and the available ways to deal with it. Various therapeutic methods and techniques were used, including discussion, video presentations, problem-solving techniques, relaxation exercises, and training in visualization and self-talk. Therapeutic skills were also reinforced through practical exercises, such as role-playing.

These methods and skills empower the participants to understand their problems and deal with them effectively, leading to an improvement in their marital life and enhancing their ability to express themselves and develop positive marital relationships. Therefore, it is evident that the counseling program had a tangible impact on the participants in the experimental group, and this effect was significant and positive on marital silence and family life quality.

To calculate the effect size, the researcher calculated Eta squared using the following formula to obtain Eta squared for independent groups ( $\eta^2 = t^2 / (t^2 + df)$ ). The effect size of the independent variable (the family counseling program) on the dependent variable (marital silence) was then estimated.

The following table presents the statistics resulting from this analysis. The suggested reference for determining effect size levels is as follows: (0.01 for small effect size, 0.06 for medium effect size, and 0.14 for large effect size).

Table (6) showing the effect size for the Marital Silence Scale for both the experimental and control groups:

<b>Variable/Domain</b>	<b>Eta Square Effect Size</b>	
Difficulty in Understanding and Communication	0.55	0.72
Life Routine	0.22	0.46
Difficulty in Expressing Emotions	0.34	0.58
Avoidance of Problems	0.49	0.70
Overall Scale	0.58	0.76

The Eta Square reflects the proportion of variance explained in each domain of marital silence, while the effect size indicates the overall impact of these domains.

The study demonstrates that there is an effect of the independent variable (the family counseling program) on the dependent variable (the marital silence scale), with a large effect size across all dimensions and the total score of the scale. This indicates the program's effectiveness and suitability in achieving the desired goals, including reducing marital silence. The information, skills, and techniques used yielded similar results for all dimensions of the scale, reflecting the attention given to each dimension individually without bias. These results are linked to the techniques, skills, information, and tools used by the researcher to clarify and convey information and their positive impact on the thoughts and behaviors of the program's participants. This confirms the first hypothesis, which states that there are differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group members in the post-measurement on the marital silence scale, favoring the experimental group members.

The results of the current study align with previous research, which also showed the effectiveness of various counseling programs in improving social interaction and reducing marital problems. This agreement is evident through a sequential review of the studies as follows: it aligns with the study by Al-Qaraleh (2022), which aimed to improve family stability and reduce emotional divorce among a sample of women attending family counseling centers; the study by Khafaja (2021), which aimed to reveal the effectiveness of a family counseling program involving couples from faculty members using indirect methods to reduce marital silence and improve social interaction between spouses; and the study by Fadel (2020), which aimed to identify the effectiveness of a problem-solving-based therapy program in reducing marital distress symptoms among newlyweds; as well as the study by Rajab (2021), which aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of professional social service intervention in alleviating the impact of marital silence caused by social networks.

It also agrees with the findings of Al-Turki's study (2019), which aimed to explore the impact of a proposed family counseling program in preventing certain dimensions of family silence, such as weak communication, lack of attention to the other, dissatisfaction with marital life, and loss of trust. It aligns with Al-Humairi's study (2019), which aimed to reveal the effectiveness of an integrative selective counseling program in reducing marital silence and improving psychological compatibility among a sample of newlyweds; and the study by Al-Majdalawi (2019), which aimed to examine the effectiveness of reality counseling in reducing marital problems among a sample of married female students at Al-Aqsa University; in addition to Hussein's study (2018), which aimed to identify the problems of marital relationships caused by the use of social networking sites; and Hamed's



study (2016), which aimed to determine the effectiveness of a counseling program in developing some strategies for solving marital problems.

The results of these studies are consistent with the current study, as all have proven the effectiveness of various counseling programs in improving social interaction and reducing marital problems. This agreement is due to the fact that all these studies employed interventions aimed at enhancing communication between spouses and providing psychological and social support to foster mutual understanding.

As for the difference between the experimental group members and the control group members, it can logically be explained by the fact that the experimental group benefited from the counseling programs applied, leading to improved social interaction and reduced marital problems compared to the control group, which did not receive any counseling interventions and thus did not show the same improvements.

The study results indicate that the family counseling program had a significant impact on reducing marital silence among the participants in the experimental group compared to the control group. This result can be explained in detail as follows:

1. **Effectiveness of the Family Counseling Program:** This type of program relies on cognitive and behavioral techniques aimed at changing negative thoughts and beliefs related to marital communication and teaching participants effective communication skills. These techniques include:
  - **Cognitive restructuring:** Participants were trained to identify negative thoughts and change them into positive and constructive ones.
  - **Training in communication skills:** This includes active listening, expressing emotions clearly, and engaging in constructive interactions with the spouse.
2. **Large Effect Size Across All Dimensions:** This indicates that the program was comprehensive and well-rounded, addressing all dimensions of marital silence systematically, leading to significant improvements in each dimension. This reflects the precision of the program's design and its focus on each aspect of marital silence independently.
3. **Equal Attention to Each Dimension Without Bias:** The equal attention given to all dimensions of marital silence shows that the researcher was keen on addressing each aspect accurately. For example, if marital silence involves weak communication and lack of attention to others, the program may have included sessions focused on improving communication and other sessions dedicated to enhancing mutual care.
4. **Impact of the Techniques and Skills Used:** The methods employed by the researcher, such as interactive sessions, practical exercises, and real-life examples, were effective in clarifying information and applying it in a way that contributed to changing participants' behaviors. This positive impact reflects the program's ability to achieve real and tangible changes in participants' lives.
5. **Validation of the First Hypothesis:** The result, which shows significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group, confirms the validity of the study's first hypothesis. These differences reflect the significant improvement in communication and the reduction of marital silence among the experimental group, indicating the success of the program in achieving its objectives.

**Hypothesis 2:** Are there statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the pre-test and post-test on the Marital Silence Scale?

To address this question, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the pre-test and post-test on the Marital Silence Scale, in favor of the post-test.

**Table (7): Differences between the Mean Scores of the Experimental Group on the Marital Silence Scale (Pre-Test and Post-Test)**

Variable	Measurement	Ranks	Number	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Z-Value	Significance Level
Difficulty in Understanding and Communication	Pre/Post	Negative	14	7.50	105.00	-3.301	0.001**
		Positive	0	0.00	0.00		
		Equal	1				
		Total	15				
Life Routine	Pre/Post	Negative	11	6.00	66.00	-2.966	0.003**
		Positive	0	0.00	0.00		
		Equal	4				
		Total	15				
Difficulty in Expressing Emotions	Pre/Post	Negative	13	7.00	91.00	-3.184	0.001**
		Positive	0	0.00	0.00		
		Equal	2				
		Total	15				
Avoidance of Problems	Pre/Post	Negative	7	4.00	28.00	-2.375	0.018**
		Positive	0	0.00	0.00		
		Equal	8				
		Total	15				
Overall Scale	Pre/Post	Negative	15	8.00	120.00	-3.415	0.001**
		Positive	0	0.00	0.00		
		Equal	0				
		Total	15				

It is evident from the table above that the calculated Z-values for Difficulty in Understanding and Communication, Life Routine, Difficulty in Expressing Emotions, Avoidance of Problems, and the overall Marital Silence Scale are (-3.301), (-2.966), (-3.184), (-2.375), and (-3.415), respectively, all of which are less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states, "There are statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the pre-test and post-test on the Marital Silence Scale." This means that there are significant differences between the pre-test and post-test mean scores, in favor of the post-test, indicating a decrease in the marital silence levels in the experimental group after the intervention. The difference in the mean ranks (positive vs. negative) reflects this, as shown in the statistics table, indicating the effectiveness of the counseling program and its positive impact on reducing marital silence when comparing the pre-test and post-test.

To determine the effect size, the researcher calculated Cohen's d value using the following equation:  $d = t / \sqrt{(n)}$ , which is interpreted according to the following standard: small effect size (0.2), medium effect size (0.5), and large effect size (0.8). The independent variable is the family counseling program, and the dependent variable is marital silence.

The following table presents the statistics resulting from this analysis:

**Table (8): Pre-test and Post-test Means and Cohen's d Value for Paired Samples**

Variable/Domain	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Difficulty in understanding and communication	29.13	19.93	1.4	Large
Routine in life	21.13	15.53	1.1	Large
Difficulty expressing emotions	22.46	16.86	1.18	Large
Escaping problems	16.26	11.60	0.67	Large
Total scale	89.00	63.93	1.64	Large

The results showed statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the experimental group on the marital silence scale, in favor of the post-test. The experimental group experienced a decrease in marital silence scores after the intervention of the family counseling program. This indicates that participants in the family counseling program achieved a noticeable improvement in their level of marital silence.

Marital silence is a broad concept encompassing several dimensions related to the quality of marital life. The main dimensions related to marital silence include:

1. **Difficulty in understanding and communication:** Refers to the partners' ability to understand each other and effectively exchange thoughts and feelings. Marital silence may lead to poor communication and increased distance between partners.
2. **Routine in life:** Reflects the presence of routine and boredom in marital life. Marital silence can lead to a decrease in enthusiasm and interaction in the relationship.
3. **Difficulty expressing emotions:** Refers to the difficulty in correctly and effectively expressing emotions and needs. Marital silence can result in the accumulation of negative emotions and tension in the relationship.
4. **Escaping problems:** Refers to avoiding or evading direct confrontation of issues and challenges in the marital relationship. Marital silence may exacerbate problems and hinder their effective resolution.

Given these dimensions, the post-test reduction in marital silence scores for the experimental group following the family counseling program intervention indicates improved understanding and communication between the partners, a decrease in routine, and an increase in emotional expression. This contributes to reducing avoidance behavior regarding problems and enhances the overall quality of marital life.

The results also showed the effect size of the family counseling program, measured by Cohen's d, between the pre-test and post-test scores on the marital silence scale. Effect size indicates the magnitude of change attributed to the intervention or independent variable, assessing how this factor impacts the dependent variable.

Applying Cohen's d equation and observing a large effect size suggests that the family counseling program had a significant and strong impact on reducing marital silence. In other words, the family counseling program played a substantial role in improving the quality of marital life among the participants, as it effectively contributed to lowering their levels of marital silence.

This result reflects the program's effectiveness in changing participants' behaviors, thoughts, and emotions, affirming the strength of the intervention in improving their marital relationships, enhancing communication, and promoting better understanding between partners.

The findings align with previous studies on marital silence, which demonstrated the effectiveness of counseling programs in reducing marital silence and improving marital interaction. The current study's results align with Khafaga's (2021) study, which aimed to reduce marital silence and improve social interaction using an indirect family counseling program. The present study's results align with this, showing significant improvement in marital interaction following the family counseling program.

Similarly, the results are in line with Al-Turki's (2019) study, which sought to prevent aspects of familial silence, such as poor communication and lack of attention to the other, through a family counseling program. The current study's significant reduction in marital silence levels reflects the effectiveness of counseling programs in enhancing communication between partners.

Furthermore, the results align with Al-Humairi's (2019) study, which focused on the effectiveness of an integrated selective counseling program in reducing marital silence and improving psychological compatibility among newlyweds. The present study's results showed improvement in psychological compatibility and a reduction in marital silence after the family counseling program.

Additionally, the findings agree with Fadl's (2020) study, which addressed the effectiveness of a problem-solving-based therapeutic program in reducing marital distress symptoms among newlyweds. The current study's results, which showed improved marital interaction and a reduction in marital silence, are consistent with Fadl's findings.

Moreover, the results align with Al-Majdalawi's (2019) study, which aimed to determine the effectiveness of a reality counseling program in reducing marital problems among married students. The current study's findings, which showed improved marital life quality and interaction between partners, are consistent with Al-Majdalawi's study.

Additionally, the findings are consistent with Hamed's (2016) study, which focused on the effectiveness of a counseling program in developing problem-solving strategies for marital problems, leading to improved interaction and reduced marital silence. The current study's findings, which demonstrated improved marital interaction and reduced silence, align with Hamed's results.

Lastly, the current study is in agreement with Rajab's (2021) study, which aimed to alleviate marital silence caused by social media usage through a professional intervention program in social work. These results are consistent with the current study, which showed improved marital interaction and reduced marital silence after implementing the family counseling program. Additionally, they align with Hussein's (2018) study, which addressed marital relationship problems caused by social media use, highlighting the importance of counseling interventions in improving marital communication.

In summary, these studies support the findings of the current study, which showed post-test differences in favor of the experimental group, confirming the effectiveness of counseling programs in reducing marital silence and improving marital interaction. These results highlight the importance of using counseling programs as an effective tool to intervene in marital relationships and enhance communication between spouses.

**Hypothesis 3: Are there statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale?**

To answer this question, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale.

**Table (9)** The Difference Between the Means of the Experimental Group on Marital Silence (Post-Test – Follow-Up)

Variable	Measurement	Ranks	Count	Mean of Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Z-Value	Significance Level
Difficulty in Understanding and Communication	Post-Test/Follow-Up	Negative	4	2.63	10.50	-0.828	0.408
		Positive	1	4.50	4.50		
		Equal	10				
		Total	15				
Routine in Life	Post-Test/Follow-Up	Negative	6	3.50	21.00	-1.187	0.235
		Positive	1	7.00	7.00		
		Equal	8				
		Total	15				
Difficulty Expressing Emotions	Post-Test/Follow-Up	Negative	6	4.25	25.50	-0.362	0.717
		Positive	3	6.50	19.50		
		Equal	6				
		Total	15				
Escaping Problems	Post-Test/Follow-Up	Negative	3	2.00	6.00	-1.633	0.102
		Positive	0	0.00	0.00		
		Equal	12				
		Total	15				
Overall Scale	Post-Test/Follow-Up	Negative	9	6.89	62.00	-1.811	0.070
		Positive	3	5.33	16.00		
		Equal	3				
		Total	15				

The table above shows that the calculated Z-values for the following variables—difficulty in understanding and communication, routine in life, difficulty expressing emotions, escaping problems, and the overall marital silence scale—are respectively (-0.828), (-1.187), (-0.362), (-1.633), and (-1.811), all with significance levels greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states "There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the experimental group members in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale," is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

This indicates the effectiveness and continued impact of the family counseling program on the group of married women. The lack of differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the post-test and follow-up measurements on the marital silence scale can be attributed to the sustained effect of the family counseling program even after the intervention period ended. This suggests that the participants benefited from the skills and knowledge gained during the program and were able to apply them and transform them into lasting behaviors in their marital lives. Although the initial change may not be significantly noticeable immediately after the program, the continuity in the practices and concepts acquired during the intervention can lead to long-term improvements in marital silence.

This underscores the importance of designing family counseling programs that encourage practical and continuous application of acquired skills, as well as providing ongoing support and follow-up for participants after the intervention period. This comprehensive approach to counseling interventions proves to be effective in

achieving lasting and sustainable changes in individuals' behaviors and feelings related to marital silence, contributing to an overall improvement in the quality of their marital lives

## Conclusion

The results of this study reveal no statistically significant differences between the post-test and follow-up test scores for the experimental group on the marital silence scale. This indicates that the family counseling program was effective in reducing marital silence, and the impact of the program remained consistent even after the intervention had ended. The participants were able to maintain the communication skills and conflict resolution strategies they learned, leading to more sustainable improvements in their marital relationships. The stability of these effects over time underscores the importance of structured counseling programs in addressing marital issues such as silence and emotional withdrawal.

## Recommendations

1. **Expand Counseling Services:** Based on the positive outcomes, it is recommended that similar family counseling programs be made widely available in family counseling centers. Special emphasis should be placed on providing follow-up support to ensure the long-term effectiveness of such programs.
2. **Focus on Practical Application:** Programs should incorporate practical exercises and real-life applications of the skills learned during counseling to promote lasting behavioral changes in marital communication.
3. **Ongoing Monitoring:** Counseling centers should implement regular follow-up sessions after the intervention ends to ensure the continuity of positive outcomes and provide additional support where needed.
4. **Inclusive Participation:** Counseling programs should encourage the participation of both spouses to facilitate better mutual understanding and more comprehensive improvements in marital communication.

## Suggestions for Future Research

- Effectiveness of a Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling Program in Reducing Marital Silence Among Recently Married Jordanian Couples"
- Impact of a Family Counseling Program Focused on Emotional Expression in Reducing Marital Silence Among Egyptian Women"
- "Effectiveness of a Family Counseling Program Based on Conflict Resolution Skills in Reducing Marital Silence Among Displaced Syrian Couples"

## References

- Abdul-Majeed, N. M. (2019). *Psychological resilience and self-assertion as predictors of marital quality among a sample of wives* (Doctoral dissertation). Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, 29(3), 499-548.
- Al-Humaieri, S. (2019). The effectiveness of a selective integrative counseling program to reduce marital silence and improve psychological compatibility among a sample of newly married women (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Arab Conferences Network, University of Duhok, Iraq, 762-788.
- Al-Jundi, N. J., & Abu Znaid, M. M. (2017). Marital silence and its relationship to psychological compatibility among a sample of couples in the West Bank. *Al-Balqa Journal for Research and Studies*, 20(1), 25-41.
- Al-Majdalawi, M. (2019). The effectiveness of a reality counseling program in reducing marital problems among a sample of married women. 1-28.
- Al-Qaratla, A. N. (2022). The effectiveness of a counseling program based on the theory of healthy relationships in improving family stability and reducing emotional divorce among a sample of women attending family counseling centers in the capital, Amman. *Journal of the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Mutah University, Jordan*, 73, 111-144.

Al-Turki, N. (2019). The effectiveness of a family counseling program based on dialogue techniques to prevent family silence in Kuwaiti families. *Journal of Education*, 184(1), 567-610.

Bornstein, M. H., & Bornstein, D. B. (1986). *Maternal responsiveness in two societies: The United States and Japan*. In W. A. Collins (Ed.), *The socialization of children* (pp. 37-56). New York: Academic Press.

Eid, N. (2018). *Quality of life scale for adolescents with hearing impairments* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). *Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, Ain Shams University, (19), 59-78.

Ghesiri, Y. (2013). A psychosociological perspective on the process of marital selection in Algerian society. *Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 223-246.

Hamed, S. (2016). *Effectiveness of a counseling program in developing some marital problem-solving strategies among married individuals in the Al-Abbasia area* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Khartoum, Sudan.

Hurtani, A. (2014). *Quality of life among mothers and its relationship with behavioral problems in children: An analytical study considering some variables: mother's age, mother's employment, and mother's educational level* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Oran, Algeria.

Makhtoub, A. A. T. (2014). *Patterns of marital treatment and their relationship to psychological adjustment among married women in the villages of northwest Jerusalem* [Master's thesis, Al-Quds University, Palestine]. Al-Quds University Digital Repository. <https://dspace.alquds.edu/handle/20.500.12213/8044>

Mohamed, S. R. (2021). The effectiveness of a professional social work intervention program to alleviate marital silence caused by social media. *Journal of the Faculty of Social Work for Social Studies and Research*, Fayoum University, 6(22), 197-228.

Annex (counseling program)

Session Number	Session Title	Session Objectives	Techniques and Methods Used	Session Duration
First	Introduction and Program Overview & Icebreaker	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants get to know each other and the facilitator.</li> <li>2. Understand the principles of family counseling.</li> <li>3. Raise awareness of marriage and married life.</li> <li>4. Learn the rules of the counseling relationship.</li> <li>5. Conduct a pre-test.</li> <li>6. Encourage participants to commit to attending sessions regularly and completing homework.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Icebreaker activity, lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, reinforcement, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart</li> </ul>	60 minutes
Second	Participants' Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify participants' expectations from the program and the benefits they hope to gain.</li> <li>2. Understand the issues participants want to address or correct.</li> <li>3. Train participants to anticipate correct thinking.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart</li> </ul>	60 minutes
Third	Relaxation and Emotional Venting Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review homework, introduce relaxation skills, and practice them.</li> <li>2. Understand the importance of</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens,</li> </ul>	60 minutes

Session Number	Session Title	Session Objectives	Techniques and Methods Used	Session Duration
Fourth	Positive Self-Talk	relaxation and its benefits. 1. Review homework, introduce the concept of positive self-talk. 2. Encourage participants to share their thoughts and talk about themselves.	balloons, projector, flip chart - Lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, homework. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes
Fifth	Concept of Marital Silence	1. Review homework, introduce the concept of marital silence and its negative impacts. 2. Identify causes and dimensions of marital silence as discussed in the study. 3. Train participants on ways to reduce or eliminate marital silence.	- Lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, homework. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes
Sixth	Concept of Family Quality of Life	1. Understand the concept of family quality of life and its impact on mental health. 2. Identify dimensions of family quality of life. 3. Present real-life experiences to illustrate how to improve family quality of life.	- Lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, positive reinforcement, homework. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes
Seventh	Communication Skills and Human Communication Theory (Satir)	1. Review homework, introduce communication skills as mentioned in the study. 2. Open dialogue among participants to identify common issues caused by poor communication with their spouses. 3. Identify targeted communication skills from the program (speaking, listening, dialogue, emotion management) and their importance. 4. Learn about Satir's theory (importance, stages, techniques).	- Lecture, discussion and dialogue, role-playing, positive reinforcement, homework. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes
Eighth	Listening Skills	1. Review homework and introduce the concept of active listening and its benefits. 2. Practice listening skills. 3. Apply listening skills.	- Discussion, lecture, role-playing, reinforcement. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes
Ninth	Marital Dialogue	1. Understand the importance of dialogue in improving marital relationships. 2. Practice friendship dialogue with spouses to strengthen the marital bond.	- Discussion, lecture, role-playing, reinforcement, homework. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes
Tenth	Speaking Skills	1. Introduce speaking skills. 2. Discuss the right time to talk to one's spouse.	- Discussion, lecture, free expression, self-talk, reinforcement, homework. - Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart	60 minutes



Session Number	Session Title	Session Objectives	Techniques and Methods Used	Session Duration
Eleventh	Emotion Management Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand emotions and how to feel marital love and its languages.</li> <li>2. Practice expressing marital love and how to build it.</li> <li>3. Discover and enhance the unique love language of spouses.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion, lecture, free expression, relaxation, reinforcement, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart</li> </ul>	60 minutes
Twelfth	Problem-Solving Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand problem-solving strategies and their steps.</li> <li>2. Follow a scientific approach to problem-solving.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion, lecture, free expression, self-talk, reinforcement, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart</li> </ul>	60 minutes
Thirteenth	Secrets of Marital Happiness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the concept of marital happiness.</li> <li>2. Identify the secrets to marital happiness and how to build it.</li> <li>3. Learn about the marital happiness tree.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion, lecture, free expression, storytelling, imagination, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart</li> </ul>	60 minutes
Fourteenth	Satir's Theory: Importance, Stages, and Applications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the concept and importance of the theory in marital life.</li> <li>2. Practice the stages of the theory.</li> <li>3. Learn how to apply the theory in family counseling.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture, discussion, dialogue and discussion, reinforcement, homework.</li> <li>- Whiteboard, papers, pens, balloons, projector, flip chart</li> </ul>	60 minutes
Fifteenth	Conclusion and Evaluation of Program Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess improvements felt by participants after completing the program.</li> <li>2. Thank participants and the venue management.</li> <li>3. Evaluate the program from the participants' perspective.</li> <li>4. Conduct a post-test and schedule a follow-up test approximately two months after the program ends.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion, lecture, free expression, self-talk, recreational activity, material incentives (gifts for participants).</li> </ul>	60 minutes