

The Effect of Adler's Marital Counseling Module on Conflict Strategies, Communication and Stress among Married Couples

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Abstract

Marital conflict, poor communication and stress in marriage are among common issues faced by married couples which often leading to dissatisfaction and breakdowns in marriage. Effective interventions that specifically focus on these issues are essential for promoting a healthy and harmonious marriage. This study aims to test the effect of Adler's Marital Counseling Module on conflict strategies, communication and stress among married couples. A quasi-experimental research design is employed with pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test. The sample for this study consists of married couples who attend the Counselling Office, Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan (MAINS). 60 Participants were selected using purposive sampling with inclusion and exclusion criteria and were divided in two groups which are experiment group (n = 30) who received treatment of Adler's Marital Counseling Module and control group (n = 30) who received no treatment. Data was collected using the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS), the Marital Communication Inventory (MCI), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) during the assessment of pre-test, post-test and follow-up test. The analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics which included the non-parametric Friedman Test. The results demonstrated that the experimental group experienced significant improvements in conflict strategies, particularly in the subscales of commitment, avoidance, interaction reactivity, and dominance. Follow-up tests confirmed the consistency of these improvements over time. Furthermore, Adler's Marital Counseling Module was effective in enhancing communication and maintaining consistency in communication variables, as well as reducing stress levels and ensuring the consistency of stress-related outcomes. The findings have practical implications for counsellors in designing counselling sessions that incorporate elements of conflict strategies, communication, and stress management for married couples. Future research should consider expanding the study

sample to include participants from both urban and rural areas and exploring the role of spirituality in marital relationships.

Keywords: Adler's Marital Counseling Module, Conflict Strategies, Communication, Stress and Married Couples

Introduction

The family is a structural unit consisting of legal marital relations (Antonovsky & Tourani, 1988). The family has a goal in develop a happy family by having positive, calm and happy relationships between family members. A happy family is able to build a prosperous family with a positive and happy personality (Pittman & Lloyd, 1988). However, there are certain challenges in trying to build a happy family. Among them are relationship conflicts, financial problems, career problems, children's problems, third party intervention and many others (McCubbin & Joy, 1980). These challenges are factors that contribute to stress in the family. When a family is faced with any issue, family members will be in a stressful situation. This unhealthy atmosphere of stress that affects the emotional, psychological and mental and in turn have a negative impact (McLanahan, 1983).

The relationship between husband and wife in overcoming marital there are various responsibilities and challenges. Married couples must be faced with misunderstandings, crises, various conflict problems in managing the household so that it brings stress. In a marital that is built, the husband and wife must fulfill the roles and responsibilities of each other and there will certainly be disagreements to carry them out (Zainab Ismail et al., 2020). Problems in marital can create stress and conflict for married couples, even if the marital is built on mutual love. Problems in marital can be hidden by troubled couples from being known by the public. However, when a divorce occurs, the problems that occur in marital can no longer be hidden from the knowledge of family members and society (Kim et al., 2023). Stress stems from marital conflicts, conflicts between siblings and conflicts between parents and children.

The cause of misunderstanding between husband and wife is related to communication (Rostami et al., 2025). The marital relationship is indirectly influenced by mutual understanding between spouses. Communication is seen to play an important role in influencing the relationship between spouses and can have an impact on the marital relationship (Mmamel & Agu, 2025). Communication is the need for married couples to feel what their respective partners want. Good communication such as paying attention to what he/she says makes the couple feel valued. Give space for the couple to express views and so a good listener to the couple can also further bridge the relationship between the two parties. If there is no communication between the spouses many problems will arise from it. From that to guarantee the happiness and harmony of the household, the couple must express all the problems faced or felt and discuss openly so that the conflicts experienced can be handled in the most appropriate way. Conflict is an inevitable part of family life.

From the total of 45,420 divorce cases registered in Malaysia in 2021, Selangor recorded 8,811 cases, followed by Johor 5,058 cases, Perak 4,215 cases and Kelantan 4,093 cases. Kedah recorded 3,873 cases of divorce, Pahang recorded 3,409 cases, Terengganu recorded 3,358 cases, Sabah with 3,027 cases, the Wilayah Persekutuan recorded 2,785 cases, Negeri Sembilan recorded 2,477 cases, Penang showed 1,932 cases, while Malacca with 1,597

cases and finally Perlis recorded 785 cases of divorce. The Malaysian Syariah Justice Department reported that among the main causes identified were lack of understanding between spouses, financial factors, failure to fulfill maintenance obligations, cheating spouses and family interference (Abu Bakar et al., 2023). This situation creates concerns about the integrity of the institution of marital in Malaysia especially for those who have stress in marital relationships caused by conflict and communication problems. This needs to be researched to provide common sense about the methods and ways that need to be paid attention to in helping married couples improve quality marital relationships (Birni & Eryilmaz, 2022). Conflicts in marital can occur every month (1 to 2 times a month), even every week. This study found that 6 out of 10 people or 59.1 percent of couples experience conflict every week.

Thus, the discussion explained that it is the role of family and marital counselling services to help husbands and wife in family life who are seen as role models to children. A well-functioning family is a family that can effectively handle stress, conflict and problems and continue to function as a family. In order to enable it to function, of course, it depends on the structure and adaptive abilities of the family (La Rosa, 2024). In this regard, family and marital counselling services need to act proactively in an effort to help troubled marital relationships (Bustin et al., 2023). Discussion and negotiation strategies are among the main strategies in almost all approaches to marital therapy. Congruent communication lessons should be an important part of every counselling intervention for post-marital. This will allow the couple to alleviate persistent problems (Gabriel, 2020). Therefore, counselling intervention to troubled couples in marital is a therapy to help couples recover stressful situations and conflicts that occur in marital. Its function is so that they can return at least to the level of their function that existed before the time of the onset of stress and conflict (Johnson & Reto, 2025). According to Norhayati Mohd Noor et al. (2020), most Malaysians are only open to undergoing family/couple counselling when the situation in their family is critical. This causes intervention to be given only when the situation in the household has reached a critical level of upheaval which will make it difficult for marital counselling sessions to be carried out. When couples lack trust in the process of counselling sessions, this will cause implications for the effectiveness of the counselling process itself.

In Malaysian context, Adler's Marital Therapy approach has yet to receive widespread attention to be applied by counsellors in Malaysia. Even local studies of Adler's approach to marital therapy have not yet been discussed theoretically and applicative. However, there are studies abroad that discuss the approach of Adler's marital therapy, especially to help improve marital relationships. But the results of overseas studies are still quite limited and poorly discussed. According to Norhayati Mohd Noor et al. (2020), there is a need to build specific modules that suit the background of the community in Malaysia related to the field of marital counselling. For that, marital in Malaysia needs to be more open and more innovative. This is a big issue because the effectiveness of module cannot be identified if no studies are conducted on its use in Malaysia. It is hoped that there are marital counselling researchers who can conduct a study on the use of module so that the level of effectiveness in Malaysia can be identified before it is applied in any institution and family counselling service agency as one of the effective approaches in marital counselling in Malaysia.

Marital education is very necessary to be applied in married couples. However, there is a lack of research that focuses more on interventions or treatments that can guide and

educate couples in forming skill-building in dealing with marital problems (Othman et al., 2023). In this study, The Adler's Marital Therapy Module was used by counsellors to conduct marital intervention on married couples to improve conflict strategies, communication and reduce stress in the marital relationship. In this regard, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of The Adler's Marital Counselling Module on conflict, communication and stress strategies among married couples. Objectives this research are testing the effectiveness of Adler's Marital Counselling Module on conflict strategies among married couples, testing the effectiveness of the Adler's Marital Therapy Module on communication among married couples and testing the effectiveness of the Adler's Marital Therapy Module on stress among married couples.

Literature Review

Many studies have looked at the relationship between conflict, communication and stress in married couples. Understanding attitudes among married couples will indirectly affect marital relationships (Norhayati Mohd Noor et al., 2020). Researchers in the field of marital counselling and communication found that discord in the household stems from negative communication that exists between couples. Among the negative communication that was found to have negative elements was the tendency of the partner to reprimand harshly, criticize the partner's attitude and personality, call the partner with bad calls, make annoying jokes, insult the partner, be defensive, refuse to talk, cannot control emotions well, refuse to forgive mistakes, do not want to improve relationships and focus bad memories in marital (Shrout et al., 2023). The challenge of managing family stressors such as bad attitudes of spouses, depression, in-law intervention, abuse or neglect (Leong & Juhari, 2021). Stress in the household puts the family members in anxiety, resentment, frustration and despair which makes them recriminate each other (Craig et al., 2022).

In addition, based on previous studies also suggest that there is a need to build a specific module that fits the background of the Muslim community in Malaysia related to the field of marital counselling (Ahmad et al., 2025). For that, marital in Malaysia needs to be more open and more innovative. Conflict management module will be proposed to help young newly married couples achieve functionality and quality in marital, especially in the first phase of marital (Hamid Mohamad @ Asanar et al., 2021). Professionals in the field of mental health are faced with significant challenges in dealing with couples in need of marital therapy. This is because most couples who have marital problems never seek therapy (Williamson et al., 2019). Adlerian group counselling at the post-test and follow-up stages reduced marital disruption and interpersonal conflict among couples (Othman et al., 2023). It can be said that this treatment is effective for researchers and family counsellors to solve couples' communication problems. Adlerian therapy was successful in improving and modifying psychological lifestyles as well as increasing couple happiness (Sodani et al., 2019). This shows that there are not many references to past studies on the effects of Adler Marital Therapy discussed, and even there are no studies in the country that discuss the effects of Adler Marital Therapy. Thus, the researchers found that this study is different from previous studies because this study related to conflict strategies, communication and stress that have not been highlighted. Although there are studies conducted on Adlerian therapy in marital, the focus of this study is more on the context of the impact of the use of modules and varies in scope, respondents and objectives of the study.

Methods

This study employed quasi-experiments to identify the effect of the Adler's Marital Counselling Module on conflict strategies, communication and stress among married couples. Researchers use quasi-experimental design because it is based on unequal groups and does not involve random selection of respondents (Rambachan and Roth (2024). This design is also always used when it involves the study of the effectiveness of a teaching method, module or program in various situations that cannot use pure experimental design. The follow up-tests were tested on respondents after four weeks of the module being implemented.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used in this study to represent the specific scope of the sample size. The researcher found that non-random sampling is suitable for this study because it focuses on certain criteria and is in accordance with the focus of the research to be carried out. Purposive sampling is a sample that focuses on a particular group and is appropriate for the purpose of studying the causes of divorce (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, in the context of this study, the researchers choose some married couples who want to get marital counselling services to improve the relationship and then maintain in the marital and do not want to go towards divorce. Married couples attend marital counselling sessions and are conducted in pairs using the Adler's Marital Counselling Module after individual counselling sessions are conducted. In the context of this study, the researchers involved 60 people the number of study subjects among spouses, 30 people for each group, experiment group (n=30) and control group (n=30) who are clients of counselling office in the District of Port Dickson. The sample size recommendation for the experimental study was 30 people per group.

Data Collection Procedure

The first phase, married couples who want to undergo marital therapy were selected as a sample in the experimental group, they underwent individual counselling sessions at the beginning and agreed to undergo marital counselling sessions with couples and were involved in undergoing modules conducted with registered counsellors (Halijah Ibrahim & Nur Hikmah Mubarak Ali, 2022). The consenting spouse has been identified through an informed consent form. Then the couple is admitted into the experiment group and they must engage five times meetings with counsellors. The implementation of counselling involving object relations requires at least five to seven meetings, some even longer. Counsellors must complete eight hours and 45 minutes for all sub-modules contained in the module which takes at least five meetings.

The study subjects selected in the experiment group specifically had the following criteria i) had undergone prior individual counselling sessions at least once; ii) spouses who wish to continue the marital relationship and do not want to divorce; iii) agreed to involve the couple in counselling sessions for treatment; iv) agreed to commit to attend treatment sessions with the couple; v) have a level of education; vii) the study subjects of couples should not attend any workshops or courses related to marital therapy while they are involved in the treatment. The counsellors involved have prepared counselling session reports based on the meetings and modules conducted to the spouses in experiment group only.

In the first phase, couples who refused to participate in marital therapy were included as a sample in the control group where they only underwent individual counselling sessions

and did not undergo marital counselling sessions with their partner. Individual counselling sessions to control group are conducted by different counsellors. Examination and selection of study subjects is carried out before treatment begins. Married couples in control group have been identified through the informed consent form that has been given. Then the couple did not want to engage in marital therapy and they only came to the counselling service. The study subjects selected in the control group in particular have the criteria i) have undergone individual counselling sessions in advance one time; ii) spouses who want to continue the marital relationship and do not want to divorce; iii) have a level of education at least can read and write; iv) live together with the couple at the time of the study; vii) the study subjects of couples should not attend any workshop or course related to marital therapy while they are involved in the study. Different counsellors have prepared reports of individual counselling sessions only for spouses in control group.

In the third phase, both subjects in experiment group and control group answered Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS), Marital Communication Inventory (MCI) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) questionnaires. The purpose of this screening process is to identify subjects who are weak conflict strategies, have communication problems and high stress as well as to avoid offering intervention to subjects who have a bad personality. After that, married couples in experiment group underwent a marital counselling session assisted by the module conducted by five counsellors who had been appointed while control group only underwent individual counselling sessions with researchers and did not undergo any marital counselling sessions with their spouses. Both groups answered the same questionnaire during the same time as the post-test and both groups answered the same set of questionnaires again Also After 4 weeks for the follow-up test. The purpose of the follow-up test is to see the consistency and stability of any changes that occur in the affected group of modules.

Data Analysis

In this study, inferential statistical analysis was used to answer the objectives of the study by using Friedman test, a non-parametric analysis. Friedman test is performed to determine the difference between two groups of samples that are paired alone or that are interconnected. The data collected is from ordinal scale data. Analysis of the study was using SPSS version 26 to obtain the difference of the pre-test, post-test and follow-up test. Analysis of conflict strategy variables were analysed separately according to sub-scales in conflict strategy variables, sub scale of compromise, sub scale of avoidance, sub scale of interaction reactivity, sub scale of separation, sub scale of dominance and sub scale of submission.

Results and Discussion

Result of analysis of mean score value of pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests for conflict strategy variables (compromise, avoidance, interaction-reactivity, separation, dominance and submission) communication variable and stress variable between experiment group and control group shown in the following table.

Table 1.

Mean scores of pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests for conflict strategy variables (compromise, avoidance, interaction-reactivity, separation, dominance and submission) communication variable and stress variable between experiment group and control group.

No.	Variables	Group	Pre test	Post test	Follow-up test
1.	Conflict strategies				
	a. Compromise	Experiment Group	2.91	3.36	3.41
		Control Group	2.39	2.33	2.34
	b. Avoidance	Experiment Group	2.91	1.65	2.02
		Control Group	2.77	2.96	2.98
	c. Interaction reactivity	Experiment Group	2.06	1.72	1.83
		Control Group	2.15	2.20	2.24
	d. Separation	Experiment Group	1.92	1.99	2.11
		Control Group	2.23	2.34	2.27
	e. Dominance	Experiment Group	1.26	1.19	1.12
		Control Group	1.60	1.57	1.59
	f. Submission	Experiment Group	2.33	2.31	2.21
		Control Group	2.39	2.45	2.45
2.	Communication	Experiment Group	1.49	1.88	1.90
		Control Group	1.47	1.44	1.45
3.	Stress	Experiment Group	2.37	1.40	1.52
		Control Group	2.43	2.39	2.44

The effect of Adler's Marital Counselling Module on pre-test, post-test and follow-up test on conflict strategy variables (sub scale of compromise, sub scale of avoidance, sub scale of interaction reactivity, sub scale of separation, sub scale of dominance and sub scale of submission) between experiment group and control group

Alternatives hypothesis (Ha1) stated that there were differences in several conflict strategy variables (sub scale of compromise, sub scale of avoidance, sub scale of interaction reactivity, sub scale of separation, sub scale of dominance and sub scale of submission) for pre-test, post-test and follow-up test between the experiment group and the control group. A statistical analysis of the Friedman test was conducted to measure the time effects of the three tests. The results showed that the analysis of Ha1, the conflict strategy and its sub-scale in three different periods (pre, post and follow-up tests) between experiment group and control group:

Sub scale of compromise

The results showed that there was a significant difference in the pre-test against sub scale compromise between experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 4.80, dk = 1 (k-1), p = .028. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.30 and experiment group 1.70. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected. The results showed that there was also a significant difference in the post-test on the sub scale of compromise between experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 21.55, dk = 1 (k-1), p = .000. Based on the mean rank found CG 1.08 and EG 1.92. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected. The results showed that there was a significant

difference in the follow-up test on the compromise sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 20.57, $dk = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .000$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.10 and experiment group 1.90. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected.

A comparative analysis of post-test between experiment group and control group showed there was a significant improvement for the sub scale of compromise. This explains that after the intervention of module, experiment group was able to increase compromise i.e., they were able to find a mutually agreed agreement to solve the problem. Noted compromise is usually considered a positive strategy because it satisfies aspects of each partner's desires or needs. Couples try to find a middle ground where neither side loses or wins (Mandal & Lip, 2022). Couples apply this strategy to find a solution even if the solution is not necessarily the best solution. Maintaining morals and treatment such as compromising and understanding between spouses can guarantee the quality of marital to be built (Musthapar, Azahari, & Ahmad, 2020). This finding is supported reporting that couple respondents in the experiment group regularly practiced compromise techniques in conflict management (Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Active listening, rational arguments and supporting the partner are related to conflict resolution. When individuals can accurately describe their thoughts or feelings, they tend to feel more satisfied in their relationships and are therefore more willing to compromise during relationship conflicts (Cordova, Gee & Warren, 2018).

Sub scale of avoidance

The results showed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test on the evasion sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square = 0.36, $dk = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .549$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.45 and experiment group 1.55. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was a significant difference in post-test on the evasion sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square = 15.21, $dk = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .000$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.85 and experiment group 1.15. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the follow-up test on the avoidance sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 6.26, $dk = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .012$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.72 and experiment group 1.28. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected.

Avoidance occurs when a person avoids conflict situations and is considered a more neutral form of conflict (Garcia-Guerrero, 2023). Separation and avoidance are considered forms of conflict, and research has not definitively determined whether they are associated with positive or negative outcomes. Therefore, the findings of this study explain that there is a reduction in avoidance in the experiment group after the module intervention is carried out compared to the control group. Couples in the experiment group showed more courage in dealing with conflict as one of the conflict strategies. When avoidance and retaliation exist in a relationship, efforts to solve constructive problems are hindered. Several studies have found that part of the conflict avoidance tactic is to increase satisfaction (Trifonoff, 2023; Overall et al., 2013). A study by Neumann, Wagner and Remor (2018). found that marital therapy has helped reduce the frequency of couple conflicts and also increased the frequency of use of positive resolution strategies and decreased the frequency of use of engagement

and avoidance conflict resolution strategies. Five months after the end of the therapy, the results were better than before its start, showing moderate to high effects (Neumann, Wagner, & Remor, 2018).

Sub scale of interaction reactivity

The results showed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test on the interaction reactivity sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 2.13, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .144$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.63 and experiment group to 1.37. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was a significant difference in post-test on the interaction reactivity sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square value = 7.76, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .005$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.75 and experiment group 1.25. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected. The results also showed that there were significant differences in the follow-up tests on the interaction reactivity sub scale between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 8.33, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .004$. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.75 and experiment group 1.25. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected.

Interaction reactivity is commonly used when a person is focused on meeting his or her own needs rather than those of a partner and thus tends to be associated with negative relationship outcomes. This explains that the experiment group seeks to reduce interaction reactivity, while the control group maintains the reactivity of the interaction, which is still the same aggressive and negative. To trust the partner and reduce negative interactions, they show better interaction, argue with a better voice and tone, and avoid words that should not be used (Johnson et al., 2022). When relationship partners could accurately describe feelings and emotions to their partners, as occurs when individuals practice the ability to describe aspects of consciousness, they are more likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction (Neumann, Wagner, & Remor, 2018). The more capable a person is in describing their feelings, the more likely a partner is to see their perspective, and understanding each other's perspective is an important component that accompanies an individual's willingness to negotiate during a disagreement.

Sub scale of separation

The results showed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test on the separation subscale between the experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square value = 1.82, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .178$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.62, and the experiment group had a score of 1.38. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the post-test on the separation subscale between the experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 2.79, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .095$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.65, and the experiment group had a score of 1.35. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the follow-up test on the separation subscale between the experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 0.14, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .705$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.53, and the experiment group had a score of 1.47. The alternative hypothesis was rejected.

Separation is considered a nonvalent form of conflict as well, and research has not definitively determined whether it is associated with positive or negative outcomes. This finding explains that the experiment group and control group have similarities in separation strategies, where both groups still leave conflict interactions after deciding or planning to discuss an issue. This finding does not determine whether the separation that occurs is positive or negative. There is one partner or both who avoid conflicts that occur by intending to discuss together at other times. This shows the couple postponing the discussion so that they still feel separated from each other, even though the experiment group has increased the subscale of compromise and reduced the subscale of avoidance and the subscale of interaction reactivity. However, on the subscale of separation, they plan to discuss but find another and more suitable time and space.

Sub scale of dominance

The results showed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test on the subscale of dominance between the experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 0.62, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .433$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.57, and the experiment group had a score of 1.43. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the post-test on the subscale of dominance between the experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 4.80, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .028$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.70, and the experiment group had a score of 1.30. The alternative hypothesis was not rejected. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the follow-up test on the subscale of dominance between the experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 7.76, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .005$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.75, and the experiment group had a score of 1.25. The alternative hypothesis was not rejected.

The subscale of dominance shows the difference between the experiment group and control group. Experiment group study subjects showed a positive reduction in dominance, where they increasingly controlled their partners less by satisfying both parties and not forcing their partners to agree to their decisions. This strategy keeps one party motivated from within and strives to compromise (Johnson et al., 2022). Conflict strategy intervention has a positive impact on satisfaction and the process of discussion between couples to reach an agreement.

Sub scale of submission

The results showed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test on the subscale of submission between the experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 2.46, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .117$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.57, and the experiment group had a score of 1.43. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the post-test on the subscale of submission between the experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 0.03, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .853$. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.52, and the experiment group had a score of 1.48. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results also showed that there was no significant difference in the follow-up test on the subscale of submission between the experiment group and control group based on the value of Chi-Square = 0.13, $df = 1 (k-1)$, $p = .715$. Based on the mean rank, the control group

had a score of 1.53, and the experiment group had a score of 1.47. The alternative hypothesis was rejected.

The experiment group and control group also show similarities on the subscale of submission. This explains that both groups cannot yet agree with their partner to satisfy the partner or completely end the conflict. Although the experiment group has shown changes on the subscales of compromise, avoidance, interaction reactivity, and dominance, there are couples who have not been able to satisfy their partner or fully agree with their partner. So, it is likely that they will need time to better agree with their partner. Submission occurs when a person has low concern for his or her own needs and high concern for those of others. Although submission can serve to satisfy the couple, this style is ultimately not associated with a high level of satisfaction for the individual who practices it.

The findings of this study are in line with Bitter (2014), who found that Adler's Marital Therapy in couples studied showed that the results of a three-month follow-up remained stable. Therefore, it can be concluded that Adlerian Marital Therapy is effective in reducing marital incompatibility in couples. Adlerian counselling at the post-test and follow-up test was able to reduce marital disorders and interpersonal conflicts among couples. On this basis, it can be said that this treatment is effective for researchers and family counsellors to solve the couple's communication problems. Couples who participated in the experiment group intervention experienced an increase in conflict resolution compared to the control group, and this increase was maintained over time (eight weeks after participating in the intervention). In addition, conflict resolution improved significantly from pre-to-post-tests, and this improvement did not decline over time (on follow-up tests) (Lammers et al., 2019). These results are consistent with previous research on conflict resolution, which also showed evidence of improvements in conflict resolution (Bader, 2017) and the retention of these changes after intervention.

Marital counselling significantly reduced marital conflict among couples in the experiment group and increased their marital satisfaction compared to the control group (Hendrix, 2015). Psychoeducational therapy helped improve marital satisfaction and sexual function of married couples in the experiment group compared to the control group (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Conflict resolution skills are generally capable of reducing conflict between divorced couples and improving their mental health. While researchers have identified constructive and destructive strategic approaches to conflict engagement, there is much more to learn about what underlies constructive rather than destructive strategic choices, particularly based on the emotional environment of many episodes of conflict. Researchers suggest that mindfulness may be an important predictive variable in couple conflict (Jacquelyn, Valerie & John, 2015).

Meanwhile, families who did not receive any intervention showed that the mean score of conflict strategy and its subscales were almost the same. The mean score explained that those who did not receive the intervention were unable to change conflict strategies. The findings of this study are in line with the previous study by Mousavi and Emadian (2020), which found that there was a significant difference between marital conflict scores compared to the control group. This finding is also in line with the findings of a study by Davis (2015),

which found no significant difference between spouses on conflict resolution in pre-test and post-test.

Table 2.

Friedman test results for pre, post and follow-up tests for conflict strategy variables (sub scale of compromise, avoidance, interaction reactivity, separation, dominance and submission) between experiment group and control group.

No.	Variable/ Sub scales	Test	Chi Square	dk	P value
1.	Conflict strategies	Pre-test	4.80	1	< .028
		Post-test	21.55	1	< .000
		Follow-up test	20.57	1	< .000
	Avoidance	Pre-test	0.36	1	> .549
		Post-test	15.21	1	< .000
		Follow-up test	6.26	1	< .012
	Interaction reactivity	Pre-test	2.13	1	> .144
		Post-test	7.76	1	< .005
		Follow-up test	8.33	1	< .004
	Separation	Pre-test	1.82	1	> .178
		Post-test	2.79	1	> .095
		Follow-up test	0.14	1	> .705
	Dominance	Pre-test	0.62	1	> .433
		Post-test	4.80	1	< .028
		Follow-up test	7.76	1	< .005
	Submission	Pre-test	2.46	1	> .117
		Post-test	0.03	1	> .853
		Follow-up test	0.13	1	> .715

The effect of Adler's Marital Counselling Module on pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests for communication variables between experiment group and control group

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha2) states that there are differences in communication variables for pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests between the experiment group and control group. The results of the Friedman test analysis of pre-, post-, and follow-up tests between the experiment group and control group showed no significant difference in the pre-test on communication between the experiment group and control group based on the Chi-Square value = 0.57, df = 1 (k-1), p = .450. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.43, and the experiment group had a score of 1.57. The alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there were significant differences in the post-test on communication between the experiment group and control group based on the Chi-Square value = 8.53, df = 1 (k-1), p = .003. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of 1.23, and the experiment group had a score of 1.77. The alternative hypothesis was not rejected. The results also showed that there were significant differences in the follow-up tests on communication between the experiment group and control group based on the Chi-Square value = 12.45, df = 1 (k-1), p = .000. Based on the mean rank, the control group had a score of

1.18, and the experiment group had a score of 1.82. The alternative hypothesis was also not rejected.

Analysis of the study explained that after the intervention of the module, the experiment group could increase the mean score of communication in the post-test. Meanwhile, the comparative analysis of the mean score of the post-test for the control group showed that there was no increase in the mean score for communication, indicating score consistency. This explains that the control group, which did not receive the intervention, showed no differences in the post-test scores. The results of the Friedman test analysis of communication in three different tests (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test) between the experiment group and control group showed that there were differences in communication for the post-test between the two groups. This explains that after the intervention of the module, the experiment group could improve the mean score of communication in the post-test. While the comparative analysis of the mean score of the post-test for the control group showed no increase in the mean score for communication, indicating that the control group did not experience the effects of the intervention.

Communication and problem-solving skills training are effective at improving couples' mental health. The results also showed that couples who participated in communication and conflict resolution skills training revealed positive levels of mental health in the experiment group. Therefore, mental health scores for participants who had undergone communication and conflict resolution skills training were significantly lower after treatment was carried out (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Marital and relationship programs provide benefits for couples in relationship satisfaction and relationship communication (Hawkins et al., 2022; Markman et al., 2023). The effect of communication training helped reduce marital relationship distress (Doss et al., 2016). Communication skills training taught individuals how to be constructive in solving problems (Hendrix, 2015).

The results of the follow-up tests for the experiment group showed a significant difference in communication. This showed that the improvement in communication could be maintained after four weeks of the intervention. The control group showed no difference, which explains that the control group, which did not receive the intervention, did not show changes in communication scores. Couples who participated in the intervention would experience an increase in effective communication compared to the control group, and this increase would be maintained over time, eight weeks after participating in the intervention (Lammers et al., 2020). Intervention strategies have a positive effect on satisfaction and the process of discussion between couples, helping them reach an agreement (Hawkins et al., 2022). Husband and wife communication plays an important role in maintaining relationships and helps in agreement formation during discussions, leading to a better understanding in relationships (Johnson et al., 2022).

Table 3

Friedman test results for pre, post and follow-up tests for communication variables between experiment group and control group.

Variable	Test	Chi Square	dk	P value
Communication	Pre-test	0.57	1	> .450
	Post-test	8.53	1	< .003
	Follow-up test	12.45	1	< .000

The effect of Adler's Marital Counselling Module on pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests for stress variables between experiment group and control group

Hypothesis testing (Ha3) states that there are differences in stress variables for pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests between experiment group and control group. The results of the Friedman test analysis of pre-post and follow-up tests between experiment group and control group, the study showed no significant difference in the pre-test on stress between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square value = 0.14 dk = 1 (k-1), p = .705. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.53 and experiment group 1.47. Hence, the alternative hypothesis was rejected. The results showed that there was a significant difference in post-stress testing between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 25.14, dk = 1 (k-1), p = .000. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.95 and experiment group 1.05. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected. The results also showed that there was a significant difference in follow-up tests on stress between experiment group and control group based on Chi-Square values = 22.53, dk = 1 (k-1), p = .000. Based on the mean rank found control group 1.93 and experiment group 1.07. The alternative hypothesis was failed to be rejected. Table 5 below is the Friedman test results for pre, post and follow-up tests for stress variables between experiment group and control group.

Table 4:

Friedman test results for pre, post and follow-up tests for stress variables between experiment group and control group.

Variable	Test	Chi Square	dk	P value
Stress	Pre-test	0.14	1	> .705
	Post-test	25.14	1	< .000
	Follow-up test	22.53	1	< .000

Comparative analysis of the mean scores of pre-tests, post-test, and follow-up tests between the experiment group and control group on stress showed that there was a difference in stress for the post-test and follow-up test between the experiment group and control group. This explains that after the module intervention, the experiment group was able to reduce the mean stress score in the post-test compared to the control group, who did not receive the module intervention. The results of the Friedman test analysis revealed a comparison of mean scores of pre-tests, post-test, and follow-up tests between the experiment group and control group on stress. The study showed that there was a difference in stress for the post-test and follow-up tests between the experiment group and control group. This explains that after the module intervention, the experiment group was able to

reduce the mean stress score in the post-test compared to the control group, who did not receive the module intervention in this study.

The effectiveness of group counselling using Adlerian therapy was found to be successful in reducing symptoms of anger, depression, and anxiety in wives (Bitter, 2013). Adlerian Marital Therapy strategies can be adapted to help middle-income couples deal with economic stress (Carlson & Sperry, 2015). The Adlerian counselling method is effective in improving mental health and social adaptation in families (Corey, 2016). While the comparison in the follow-up tests between the experiment group and control group showed that there was a significant difference in stress, this shows that receiving the module created mean score consistency after several weeks of follow-up testing. The results showed that the module maintained its effect on stress levels, as demonstrated by a consistent mean score after the follow-up testing period. At the same time, the control group, which did not receive any intervention, also showed almost the same mean score in the follow-up test. The mean score explained that those who did not receive the intervention did not have the ability to improve stress between spouses. The effects of therapy on post-testing for couples with high stress, and on follow-up testing in the long term, found that stress was reduced for couples (Gottman, 2015). Marital therapy based on stress management can contribute to increased marital satisfaction, especially in infertile women, and the effects of therapy can remain three months after the last intervention (Li, Wang & Li, (2019). After intervention and follow-up, couples within the scope of marital distress reported maintaining these improvements six months to four years later (Halford, et al. (2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, conflict strategies, communication and stress among married couples can be helped and learned through appropriate interventions with them. This can be proven through this study and can support previous studies that prove marital therapy that uses a module approach can improve conflict strategies such as compromise, reduce avoidance, reduce reactivity of interaction, reduce dominance, improve communication in turn helps reduce the stress experienced in their marital relationship. Adler's Marital Counselling Module can be applied in the real field to married couple clients who want to get family and marital counselling services and guided by counsellors. This study adds to the findings of studies related to family and marital counselling interventions through the development of module to help married clients face the challenges of marital and family. The module is one of the effective interventions in marital counselling. However, there is still a lot of research to be done in the Malaysian context after this module was effectively used among married couples in Malaysia. It is hoped that more studies related to the module can be carried out to help married couples get effective interventions and indirectly improve and improve marital relations and family relations in general, thus reducing the statistics of divorce in Malaysia.

This study makes significant contributions to both theory and practice by examining the effect of Adler's Marital Counseling Module on conflict strategies, communication patterns, and stress levels among married couples. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends Adlerian Individual Psychology by empirically validating its application within marital counseling contexts. While Adler's theory emphasizes social interest, lifestyle, goal orientation, and feelings of belonging, empirical studies that systematically examine its structured use in marital interventions remain limited. By operationalizing Adlerian principles

into a counseling module and testing its effects on specific relational outcomes namely conflict strategies, communication effectiveness, and stress this study strengthens the theoretical linkage between Adlerian concepts and measurable marital functioning. The findings contribute to counseling and family therapy literature by demonstrating how Adlerian based interventions can facilitate healthier interaction patterns, constructive conflict resolution, and emotional regulation within marriage.

Contextually, this study addresses a critical gap in marital counseling research by situating Adler's Marital Counseling Module within the lived experiences of married couples in the local sociocultural setting. Marital conflict, communication breakdown, and stress are often shaped by cultural norms, gender roles, and societal expectations; however, many existing intervention models are developed and tested in Western contexts. This research provides context-specific evidence of the module's effectiveness, thereby enhancing its cultural relevance and applicability. The findings offer valuable insights for counselors, psychologists and family practitioners seeking culturally responsive and theoretically grounded interventions to support marital well-being.

Overall, this study contributes to existing knowledge by bridging theory and practice, demonstrating that Adlerian counseling principles can be systematically translated into effective marital interventions. Practically, the results inform the development of evidence-based counseling modules that can be implemented in marital counseling settings to improve relationship quality and psychological well-being. The study also lays a foundation for future research to adapt, refine, and test Adlerian-based marital interventions across diverse populations and contexts.

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