

# Happiness Therapy and Emotion Regulation for Early Married Couples Facing Emotional Abuse in the Marelan Area

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## ABSTRACT

Conflicts were Indonesia's most common causes of divorce in 2023, accounting for 251,828 instances, or 61.67% of total divorce cases. Emotional abuse is a significant problem that can affect any relationship, even young married. A research analysis discovered that counseling and therapies were beneficial in mitigating the detrimental impacts of emotional abuse. The aim of the study is happiness therapy and emotion regulation for early marriage couples. This study was a pre-experimental approach. The study's statistical population consisted of 8 couples selected as a sample by purposive and voluntary sampling. Then, the happiness therapy and emotional regulation therapy protocol by Seligman. The researcher implemented the therapy in three sessions of 60-90 minutes. Then, the approaches were performed in pairs for happiness therapy and emotional regulation therapy for each couple with a month follow-up. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews. The study's findings suggest that, on a qualitative level, the informants' pre-therapy emotions were melancholy because of the emotionally abusive home environments they frequently experienced. Several informants felt disheartened and helpless to change their circumstances. Behavioral improvements were noted concerning happiness and emotional regulation. These included modifications to behaviors related to relying on calmness, communicating happiness without expressing emotion, and viewing happiness as a marriage obligation. This study can conclude that as couples learn to navigate their relationship dynamics with empathy and understanding, create a resilient partnership capable of weathering challenges without resorting to harmful behaviors. By prioritizing happiness therapy principles, couples can cultivate a harmonious union characterized by mutual respect and love.

## KEYWORDS

Happiness; emotion regulation; early marriage; emotional abuse.

## INTRODUCTION

Conflicts and fights were Indonesia's most common causes of divorce 2023, accounting for 251,828 instances, or 61.67% of total divorce cases (Divorce rate in Indonesia, 2023). Furthermore, economic difficulties are vital in the rising divorce rate, which now stands at 108,488. In North Sumatra, there are 15,660 divorces. A total of 13,709 divorces happened as a result of persistent conflicts and arguments, 136 incidences of domestic violence, and 1,065 cases of one partner abandoning the other (BPS, 2023).

According to the data, most divorces result from frequent disagreements within the household. When disputes become persistent and unhealthy, they can lead to emotional abuse within the home. Arguments that escalate into verbal abuse are one example of

emotional abuse in the home. During these disagreements, one party frequently uses harsh and degrading language to hurt their partner's feelings. Emotional abuse is a significant problem that can affect any relationship, even young married couples. While physical abuse is frequently more evident and more accessible to detect, emotional abuse can be more subtle but equally harmful to a person's mental and emotional well-being.

Sillito (2019) found that emotional abuse in households can have significant consequences for an individual's psychological well-being, including mental health concerns, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. As a result, couples must discuss disagreements in their relationship healthily and productively to avoid emotional abuse and maintain their psychological well-being.

Furthermore, emotional abuse in the home impacts not only the husband or wife but also the children's mental health. Research suggests that verbally abused children may experience emotional issues such as low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, and mental health difficulties (Syukurman et al., 2023). Furthermore, verbal abuse can cause youngsters to become ethically compromised, more inclined to use nasty words, and less sensitive to others (Nurhidayatika and Waluyati, 2021). Verbal violence has both immediate and long-term consequences (Setyaningrum and Arifin, 2019).

Emotional abuse in young married couples is a severe issue that can have long-term consequences for all parties involved. Various strategies are available to prevent emotional abuse in the home. Research shows that a variety of treatment approaches can effectively address the impact of domestic abuse on victims. Research has shown that art therapy can reduce anxiety in female survivors of domestic violence (Joseph et al., 2018). Ruqyah Syar'iyah therapy dramatically raised satisfaction levels among women who had experienced domestic violence (Jayanti et al. 2019). A research analysis discovered that many interventions, such as counseling and other therapies, were beneficial in mitigating the detrimental impacts of domestic violence partners. These findings suggest that focused treatment interventions can be critical in supporting both couples in improving their emotional well-being. This study utilized happiness treatment and mood management.

Happiness therapy involves helping individuals identify and prioritize their emotional well-being. This includes learning to prioritize self-care, set boundaries, and practice self-love. Individuals can develop a sense of self-worth and confidence by focusing on their happiness, which reduces their susceptibility to manipulation or control by a partner. Research has shown that positive psychotherapy increased marital satisfaction, love-making styles, and happiness among couples, but did not address verbal abuse

(Heydari, 2020). Furthermore, emotional regulation is another important aspect of preventing emotional abuse in young couples. This involves learning how to manage and express emotions healthily and effectively. By developing the skills to regulate emotions, individuals are less likely to lash out or engage in harmful behaviors that can lead to emotional abuse.

Research has proven that emotion regulation training can increase marital satisfaction (Fauziah et al., 2023) and Emotional maturity has a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction (Zuhdi and Yusuf, 2022). This research will conduct happiness therapy and emotion regulation for early marriage couples in Medan Marelan.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study was a qualitative approach. The study's statistical population consisted of 8 couples selected as a sample by purposive and voluntary sampling methods. Before the treatment, participants completed the Partner Abuse Scale (Non-physical) (PASNP). Then, the happiness therapy and emotional regulation therapy protocol by Seligman (2013). This

intervention was meant to improve the psychological and relational indicators related to happiness for the married couple. The researcher implemented the therapy in three sessions of 60-90 minutes, Then, the approaches were performed in pairs for happiness therapy and emotional regulation therapy for each couple with a month follow-up. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Characteristic of Informants

<b>Name and Age</b>	<b>Reason for Marriage</b>	<b>Had/never experienced Emotional Abuse</b>	<b>Issues that Often Trigger Arguments</b>	<b>How Does the Partner Respond When Facing Emotional Abuse?</b>	<b>What Does the Term Family Happiness Mean for Both Partners?</b>
ES (20)	Saling loves each other and both parents have also agreed to marry	Ever experienced Emotional Abuse	Misunderstanding both partners	Sad but must be patient.	A harmonious family
BF (20)	Feels compatible and suggestions from the husband's family	Ever experienced Emotional Abuse	We have often disagreed and frequently argued loudly	Anger towards partner	Happy family
GS (19)	Feels bored sleeping alone	Ever experienced Emotional Abuse	Almost every day there are different opinions	Stays silent	Happy family
AW (22)	I have a life partner	Ever experienced Emotional Abuse	My wife has changed she is no longer like she was during our dating days	Sad and sometimes crying	A family that never fights
PN (22)	Did not intend to marry young, but it was all destined by Allah SWT	Ever experienced Emotional Abuse	Different views	Yielding because I dislike conflict	Family happiness
DP (20)	To avoid humiliation from slander and adultery	Never experienced Emotional Abuse	Because of trivial matters	Disappointed and angry due to feelings of injustice	Mutual understanding and patience
FR (20)	I am mentally and financially ready	Ever experienced Emotional Abuse	Different opinions	Disappointed and sad	Appreciating each other
DS (21)	I am ready to marry	Never experienced Emotional Abuse	Different opinions	Disappointed and sad	The mature partner who cares for the family

**Table 2.** The Therapy Administration

Session Counseling	Emotional Regulation Counseling	Happiness Counseling
<b>Session I</b>	Know Yourself and Your Emotions	Remembering Moments of Happiness That Occurred During Marriage
<b>Session II</b>	Manage Emotions	Positive Relationship
<b>Session III</b>	Expressing Emotions Appropriately	Applying Virtue of Humanity and Love

### **Factors Leading to Verbal Abuse in Households (Before Treatment)**

#### *1. Differences in Opinions*

Couples should strive to understand each other's communication styles and work towards expressing their thoughts and feelings constructively. A marriage often brings together two individuals with diverse backgrounds and upbringings. These differences shape their respective worldviews, values, and beliefs, leading to a variety of opinions on numerous topics. For instance, one partner may have grown up in a household where open debate and confrontation were encouraged, while the other might have been raised in an environment that valued harmony and conflict avoidance. Consequently, their approaches to disagreements may differ significantly

*“Usually, harsh words come out because of differing opinions with my husband and misunderstandings (Informant GS)”*

*“Verbal abuse happens due to misunderstandings; my husband and I have our own opinions and stick to them (Informant ES)”*

*“We often have differing views, and I (the wife) usually hold back my disappointment with my husband's words (Informant PN)”*

*“Almost every day, my husband and I hold onto our opinions, and in the end, he speaks harshly to me; I also, when angry, can end up shouting (Informant BF)”*

*“My husband rarely follows my words; we often have differing opinions (Informant DS)”*

#### *2. Difficulty Controlling Emotions*

Emotional control contributes significantly to fostering a supportive environment within romantic relationships. When partners regulate their emotions effectively, they create a safe space for open and honest communication. This supportive atmosphere encourages both individuals to express themselves freely, knowing that their emotions will be met with understanding rather than judgment

*“We are both still young and stubborn; when he is emotional, I become emotional too...” (Informant ES)*

*“I am easily angered, often emotional, and this causes us to frequently argue, leading to my husband using harsh words (Informant DP)”*

#### *3. Long Distance Relationship*

*“My husband and I have been married for 8 months; since the marriage, my husband has been working out of town, so he often gets angry and uses harsh words, maybe he is suspicious of me here.” (Informant FR).*

#### *4. Trivial Matters*

*"Because of trivial matters, he (the husband) gets angry and uses harsh words". (Informant DP)*

*"We often argue over things that are not worth fighting about, and in the end, he uses harsh words towards me (the wife)." (Informant AW)*

### **Changes in emotional abuse behavior and happiness condition as a result of therapy (after 1 month of therapy)**

#### **1. Relying on Calmness**

"There's been a change, at least before I was always easily angered, now even from a distance I don't get emotional. When asked nicely if it takes a while to answer the phone..." (Informant DP)

"We made an agreement, ma'am, if you want to get angry or emotional, don't talk first, stay silent... when you feel calm, then talk." "So that communication is more pleasant and enjoyable." (Informant FR)

"I feel happier, ma'am because my husband also realizes our mistakes all this time, so we strive to talk about it calmly so that it's pleasant for both of us." (Informant AW)

#### **2. Communicating happiness without expressing emotion**

"It seems to have changed, now we take the time to talk together to discuss issues, so even though we don't have much money, we promise to share problems and resolve them amicably." (Informant ES)

"...we now take the time to discuss, and during discussions, we shouldn't get angry so that the conversation is pleasant." Thank you, ma'am, there has been a change, becoming calmer and not easily angered. Thinking now, I have to be happy and sane. (Informant FN)

#### **3. Happiness as Married Obligation**

"Now I understand, the principle of marriage is to be happy, not to be stubborn and selfish." (Informant DP)"

"... there has been a change, ma'am, even if we don't have much money now, our small family must be happy." "Still grateful we can eat..." (Informant BF)

*".. I am happier than before because, now we can talk without bullying and there is no animal word again" (Informant GS).*

### **Discussion**

Emotional abuse or verbal abuse is one of the most common forms of intimate partner violence and can have long-lasting negative consequences on the individuals involved. Verbal abuse in relationships often stems from uncontrolled emotions, such as anger, jealousy, or insecurity. External pressures, such as financial difficulties, work-related stress, or family obligations, can significantly impact how couples handle disagreements. When under pressure, individuals may resort to harmful behaviors, including verbal abuse, as an outlet for their frustration. These actions harm the relationship and create a toxic environment that is detrimental to both partners' well-being.

Research has shown that the ability to regulate emotions is a learned skill that can be developed over time (Gross, 2015). Emotion regulation plays a key role in preventing verbal abuse in relationships. By being able to regulate their emotions, individuals can



better constructively communicate their needs and concerns, without resorting to hurtful words or behaviors. Couples who can regulate their emotions are more likely to resolve conflicts peacefully and maintain a healthy relationship.

Previous studies indicated that emotional awareness, a component of emotion regulation, also demonstrates a positive relationship with marital satisfaction (Roslan et al., 2023). Furthermore, Emotion regulation instruction based on Gross's model has been shown to improve various aspects of marital adjustment, including affective presentation, couple adhesion, agreement, and satisfaction in couples experiencing marital conflicts (Valipoursheikhi & Mirederikvand, 2019).

Happiness therapy is also effective in avoiding verbal abuse and focuses on the factors that contribute to an individual's overall happiness and life satisfaction. This approach emphasizes the importance of identifying and nurturing the positive aspects of one's life, rather than solely addressing the negative or problematic areas. In the context of romantic relationships, happiness is not only important for the individuals involved but also crucial for the overall health and success of the relationship. When couples are happy, they tend to communicate better, resolve conflicts more effectively, and have a stronger sense of unity. However, achieving happiness in a relationship is not always easy and requires effort and dedication from both partners.

Happiness therapy, particularly through Emotion-Focused Couple-Based Interventions, has emerged as a viable approach to decreasing emotional abuse within couples. A study by Mariem (2024) demonstrated that such interventions significantly reduced emotional abuse and enhanced marital satisfaction across various dimensions, including emotional and sexual satisfaction. This suggests that addressing the underlying emotional needs of partners can foster healthier communication patterns and mitigate abusive behaviors.

One effective way to increase happiness in a relationship is through happiness therapy. Happiness therapy is a form of therapy that focuses on enhancing positive emotions, fostering gratitude, and promoting overall well-being. It can be especially beneficial for couples experiencing challenges in their relationship or feeling disconnected from each other. Couples can learn to cultivate happiness in their relationship and strengthen their bond by participating in happiness therapy. In conclusion, happiness therapy offers a promising approach for couples seeking to enhance their overall well-being and strengthen the foundation of their relationship.

## CONCLUSION

Effective downregulation of negative emotions during conflicts has been shown to lead to higher levels of marital satisfaction, particularly among wives. This finding underscores the importance of emotional management as a predictor of long-term relational well-being. fostering open communication while respecting individual differences serves as a critical foundation for any marriage seeking to avoid the pitfalls of verbal abuse. As couples learn to navigate their relationship dynamics with empathy and understanding, they create a resilient partnership capable of weathering challenges without resorting to harmful behaviors. By prioritizing happiness therapy principles, couples can cultivate a harmonious union characterized by mutual respect and love.

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