

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The discipline of therapy has grown in recent years to include modern approaches that take advantage of the complementary nature of therapeutic interventions and experiential learning. At the forefront of this development is adventure-based therapy (ABT), which provides a special chance for partners to partake in life-changing activities against the backdrop of the outdoors.

Adventure-based therapy provides a dynamic alternative to traditional therapy approaches, which certainly have their merits. It uses the power of adventure to enable significant changes in relational dynamics and personal growth. But even with its increasing acceptance and encouraging results in a range of therapy settings, little is known about the precise effects of Acceptance and Balance Therapy (ABT) on couples' relationships.

By exploring into the lived experiences of couples involved in adventure-based therapy programs, this research aims to provide insight in which this innovative therapeutic modality shapes their lives and relationships. Through a narrative inquiry lens, the researcher aims to investigate the complexities and uniqueness of couples' journeys, focusing on the transformative potential of adventure-based therapy in fostering resilience, connection, and growth within intimate partnerships.

1.2 Background of the Study

Adventure-based therapy (ABT) is an innovative approach that combines experiential learning, outdoor activities, and therapeutic interventions. While previous studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in various therapeutic settings, only few has focused specifically on its impact on couples' relationships. Therefore, this research aims to explore the lived experiences of couples participating in adventure-based therapy and understand how this approach influences their life. The findings will contribute to the knowledge base in this area and inform professionals working with couples, fostering the development of therapeutic approaches that promote healthy and thriving relationships.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

While adventure-based therapy has been recognized as effective in various therapeutic contexts, there is a lack of research specifically examining its influence on couples' relationships (Fletcher, Williams, & Anderson, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to explore the lived experiences of couples engaging in adventure-based therapy and understand how this approach influences their life.

The lack of a clear framework for describing the services provided by adventure-based therapy (ABT) programs is a hurdle. The professional credentials needed to practice ABT are not consistently established (Newes & Bendoroff, 2004). In terms of the services provided, for instance, programs that utilize the words "therapy" or "therapeutic" in the title of their offering may be misleading (Williams, 2004).

The vague titles of therapy and therapeutic raise many questions for those curious in discovering more about such an approach. How therapeutic is the program? Is therapeutic similar to therapy? What are the qualifications of the individual conducting the therapy component when a program's title includes the word "therapy"? How frequently and how is therapy delivered? Are the program's instructors appropriately qualified in both therapeutic techniques and adventurous activities? According to Gillis and Bonney (1986), adventure-based therapy programs are more effective when the treatment plan or framework is based on a review of the clients' requirements and delivered by experts with training in both therapy and outdoor activities.

Research studies based on a unified theory and with greater levels of validity and reliability are needed for AT to be recognized as being evidence-based (Newess & Bandoroff, 2004). Standard guidelines for ethical programming may be established after AT develops a base model that enables research to validate the field as being evidence-based. Standardization would assist in maintaining the professional standards that programs must adhere to provide clients with excellent services.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore into the lived experiences of couples who have participated in adventure-based therapy (ABT) programs. By employing a narrative inquiry approach, this research seeks to understand how ABT influences couples' relationships and overall well-being.

Additionally, the study aims to identify the key benefits and challenges associated with this therapeutic modality, contributing to the growing body of knowledge in the field of adventure-based therapy and its application to couples counseling.

1.5 Research Questions

To address the objectives, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What are the lived experiences of couples who have participated in adventure-based therapy?
2. How does adventure-based therapy influence couples' relationships and their overall life?
3. What are the benefits and challenges of adventure-based therapy for couples?

1.6 Objectives of the Study

Through this study, the researcher aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the lived experiences of couples participating in adventure-based therapy.
2. Understand how adventure-based therapy influences couples' relationships.
3. Identify the benefits and challenges of adventure-based therapy for couples.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study extends beyond providing a qualitative investigation into the lived experiences of couples in adventure-based therapy; it also intersects with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory; enriching understanding of how experiential learning processes operate within the context of couples' therapeutic journeys.

This research provides an opportunity to investigate the life-changing effects of adventure-based therapy in further detail by aligning with Kolb's framework and providing insight on the complex interactions between experiential engagement, reflective processing, and relationship dynamics.

By exploring how couples navigate the stages of Kolb's learning cycle during their adventure therapy experiences, this study provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which adventure-based interventions facilitate relational growth and personal development.

Moreover, by uncovering the specific benefits and challenges of adventure-based therapy for couples, this research equips practitioners with empirically grounded knowledge to inform the design and implementation of more effective therapeutic interventions.

Ultimately, the findings of this study hold the promise of enhancing the quality of couples' relationships and fostering resilience, connection, and growth within intimate partnerships, thereby contributing to the advancement of both theory and practice in the field of adventure-based therapy.

1.8 Conceptual Definitions

Key terms used in the study;

adventure-based therapy, lived experiences, relationship dynamics, couples' relationship, experiential learning, outdoor activities, and therapeutic intervention.

1.9 Conclusions

This chapter has introduced the concept of adventure-based therapy (ABT) and its potential to influence couples' relationships. It has highlighted the need for further research in this area, particularly regarding the lived experiences of couples participating in ABT programs.

The chapter outlined the purpose of the study, which is to explore the lived experiences of couples in ABT, understand how ABT influences their relationships, and identify the benefits and challenges associated with this therapeutic approach. The research questions were formulated to guide the investigation.

The significance of the study was emphasized, highlighting its potential to contribute to both theory and practice in the field of ABT. The research findings can provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which ABT facilitates relational growth and personal development in couples.

By uncovering the specific benefits and challenges of ABT, the study can equip practitioners with knowledge to design and implement more effective therapeutic interventions for couples. Therefore, the research holds the promise of enhancing the quality of couples' relationships and fostering stronger, more resilient partnerships.