

Clinical Trial Protocol

Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

16 Sep 2026

Investigating the effect of acceptance and commitment therapy on emotional empathy, adaptability, emotional inadequacy and marital functioning in incompatible young couples.

Protocol summary

Registration timing: **registered_while_recruiting**

Study aim

Investigating the effect of acceptance and commitment therapy on emotional empathy, adaptability, emotional inadequacy and marital functioning in incompatible young couples.

Last update: **2023-07-24, 1402/05/02**

Update count: **0**

Registration date

2023-07-24, 1402/05/02

Design

A controlled, randomized clinical trial on 52 people, using the table of random numbers.

Registrant information

Name

Amir masoud Mirbagheri

Name of organization / entity

Country

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Phone

+98 35 3823 6421

Email address

goosheamm@gmail.com

Settings and conduct

The target community includes all the incompatible young couples of Yazd city who refer to the counseling and divorce centers of this city in 1402. The research design of the current study is a clinical trial research method with pre-test and post-test measurements in both groups (experimental group and control group) with a six-month follow-up period.

Recruitment status

Recruitment complete

Funding source

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria: Having at least 3 years of living together; Ability to participate in meetings as two people. Exclusion criteria: Suffering from severe psychiatric or medical disorders.

Expected recruitment start date

2023-07-23, 1402/05/01

Expected recruitment end date

2023-08-16, 1402/05/25

Actual recruitment start date

empty

Actual recruitment end date

empty

Trial completion date

empty

Intervention groups

For the experimental group, a specific treatment protocol based on acceptance and commitment is performed in 8 sessions of 60 to 90 minutes per week and as weekly group sessions (one session per week).

Main outcome variables

emotional empathy: adaptability: emotional inadequacy : marital functioning

Scientific title

Investigating the effect of acceptance and commitment therapy on emotional empathy, adaptability, emotional inadequacy and marital functioning in incompatible young couples.

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information

IRCT registration number: **IRCT20210708051815N2**

Registration date: **2023-07-24, 1402/05/02**

Public title

Investigating the effect of ACT treatment on cognitive and emotional variables in incompatible young couples.

Purpose

Treatment

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:

Having at least 3 years of cohabitation. Ability to participate in meetings as two people. Age range 20 to 35 years.

Exclusion criteria:

Suffering from severe medical or mental disorders The person is undergoing psychotherapy with another method. Action and involvement in the divorce process. Marital infidelity in the first years after marriage.

Age

From **20 years** old to **35 years** old

Gender

Both

Phase

N/A

Groups that have been masked

No information

Sample size

Target sample size: **52**

Randomization (investigator's opinion)

Randomized

Randomization description

All 3 sampling centers provided the researcher with a list that only included the surnames of the men, their contact number and the date of their visit to the center. In the next step, with the list of people in hand, which actually only includes men (wives), 52 items will be marked from among the items in the list through the table of random numbers. It should be noted that the process of random numbers will be done using the kitset.ir site. In the next step, within 3 days from 5 to 8 August 1402, each of the numbers will be contacted and the first questions will determine whether the reference is still married or not. If couples do not meet the initial conditions in the sampling process, randomization will be done again from the rest of the list.

Blinding (investigator's opinion)

Not blinded

Blinding description

Placebo

Not used

Assignment

Parallel

Other design features

Secondary Ids

empty

Ethics committees

1

Ethics committee

Name of ethics committee

Ethics Committee of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

Street address

Tehran Province, Tehran. Velenjak, Bldg No.2 SBUMS, Arabi Ave

City

Tehran

Province

Tehran

Postal code

1985717443

Approval date

2023-07-01, 1402/04/10

Ethics committee reference number

IR.SBMU.MSP.REC.1402.143

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied

Spousal incompatibility and divorce.

ICD-10 code

ICD-10 code description

Primary outcomes

1

Description

One of the influential components of couples' conflicts and incompatibility is emotional empathy. Emotional empathy is actually the result of intimacy, personal romantic relationship based on recognition and understanding and expression of emotions. Emotional empathy is one of the important factors of a stable marriage and its deficiency can cause problems in the marriage relationship. Emotional empathy and creating a sincere relationship with one's spouse is one of the main reasons for marriages in the last century. Research shows that emotional empathy is one of the main variables of marital satisfaction and usually couples with higher satisfaction show more empathy. Emotional empathy in couples has a direct impact on life satisfaction and is the main factor in preventing relationship aggression in couples. Also, proper emotional empathy in couples reduces the amount of personal distress and makes couples deal with incompatibilities with more positive emotions. In simpler terms, emotional empathy makes couples perceive conflict more fairly and more satisfactorily and use more friendly conflict resolution methods. Glaser suggests that the lack of emotional empathy is one of the main causes of couples' incompatibility, which arises due to the inability to recognize the needs of the other party and the lack of compatibility in satisfying personal and common needs. Researches show that conflicted couples are not able to accept the emotional conditions of themselves and their spouses, they have a deficiency in empathy, and for this reason, they use ineffective emotion-oriented coping strategies. For this reason, it is important that the emotional empathy of the couple is corrected and restored. The inability to empathize emotionally in couples is the result of not recognizing

emotions and feelings and trying to control and restrain emotions and cognitions. As a result, ACT with the components of acceptance and increasing awareness of the present moment can be effective in improving emotional empathy in couples.

Timepoint

In the present study, measurements are taken once before the intervention, once after and once again 6 months after the intervention.

Method of measurement

Epstein's Emotional Empathy Questionnaire is used to measure this variable.

Secondary outcomes

1

Description

Another component that can be affected by conflicts and incompatibilities in marriage is adaptability. Adaptability is actually a balanced process of attachment, personal independence and emotional connection with clear boundaries in couples. In simpler terms, adaptability is the ability of couples to manage relationships and roles and includes components such as leadership, conversation style, and conflict resolution strategies. Researches consider adaptability in couples in four categories: dry and low level, structured or average, flexible or appropriate, and chaotic or without specific boundaries. Therefore, in the marital incompatibility of couples, their adaptability is reduced and the satisfaction and happiness resulting from the relationship is threatened. For this reason, it is necessary to use trainings and methods to increase the level of adaptability in couples with conflict. Research shows that the ability to adapt is greater in people who have more self-awareness and have a greater capacity to coordinate emotions and behavior. Therefore, the component of mindfulness in therapy based on acceptance and commitment can help increase the level of adaptability.

Timepoint

It is measured in 3 stages before and after the intervention and 6 months after the end of the treatment.

Method of measurement

Olson et al.'s adaptability questionnaire is used.

Intervention groups

1

Description

Intervention group: In this research, the 8-session treatment protocol based on acceptance and commitment by Forman and Herbert is used. Each session will be around 60 to 90 minutes, and the sessions will be centered around achieving creative frustration and values-based action, respectively.

Category

Behavior

2

Description

Control group: The control group in the present study is actually a waiting group, and after the posttest and follow-up process, the same treatment method that was done for the intervention group is also done for them in order to comply with the ethics in the research.

Category

Behavior

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center

Name of recruitment center

Yazd Divorce Counseling and Prevention Center

Full name of responsible person

Dr. Yusuf Sabbagh

Street address

Yazd - Imam Javad neighborhood - Yas St

City

Yazd

Province

Yazd

Postal code

8949193775

Phone

+98 35 3833 6981

Email

closet749@gmail.com

Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor

Name of organization / entity

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

Full name of responsible person

Dr. Abbas Masjidi Arani

Street address

Tehran-Volanjak-Arabi St.-Taleghani Hospital.

City

Tehran

Province

Tehran

Postal code

1985717443

Phone

+98 21 23871

Email

dean.medicalschool@sbmu.ac.ir

Grant name

Grant code / Reference number

Is the source of funding the same sponsor organization/entity?

Yes

Title of funding source

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

Proportion provided by this source

Public or private sector

Public

Domestic or foreign origin

Domestic

Category of foreign source of funding*empty***Country of origin****Type of organization providing the funding**

Academic

Person responsible for general inquiries**Contact****Name of organization / entity**

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

Full name of responsible person

Amir Masoud Mirbagheri

Position

student

Latest degree

Master

Other areas of specialty/work

Psychology

Street address

Valenjak - Arabi St. - Taleghani Hospital

City

Tehran

Province

Tehran

Postal code

1985717443

Phone

+98 21 23871

Email

goosheamm@gmail.com

Person responsible for scientific inquiries**Contact****Name of organization / entity**

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

Full name of responsible person

Amir Masoud Mirbagheri

Position

student

Latest degree

Master

Other areas of specialty/work

Psychology

Street address

Valenjak- Arabi St.- Taleghani Hospital

City

Tehran

Province

Tehran

Postal code

1985717443

Phone

+98 21 23871

Email

goosheamm@gmail.com

Person responsible for updating data**Contact****Name of organization / entity**

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences

Full name of responsible person

Amir Masoud Mirbagheri

Position

student

Latest degree

Master

Other areas of specialty/work

Psychology

Street address

Velanjak- Arabi Street- Taleghani Hospital

City

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Province

Tehran

Postal code

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Phone

+98 21 23871

Email

goosheamm@gmail.com

Sharing plan**Deidentified Individual Participant Data Set (IPD)**

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Study Protocol

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Statistical Analysis Plan

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Informed Consent Form

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Clinical Study Report

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Analytic Code

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Data Dictionary

Yes - There is a plan to make this available

Title and more details about the data/document

After the current research, the existing databases are used for data sharing.

When the data will become available and for how long

After doing the research

To whom data/document is available

Researchers and researchers

Under which criteria data/document could be used

Only for use in other research

From where data/document is obtainable

They can refer to the declared database.

What processes are involved for a request to access data/document

First the approval of the executive team and then access

Comments