Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

07 Nov 2026

Comparing the Effectiveness of Emotionally Focused and Cognitive–Behavioral Couple Therapies in Enhancing Emotional Expressiveness and Communication Skills among Distressed Couples

Protocol summary

Study aim
Comparing the Effectiveness of Emotionally Focused and Cognitive–Behavioral Couple Therapies in Enhancing Emotional Expressiveness and Communication Skills among Distressed Couples

Design
Given that the present study compares the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy and Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy on improving emotional expressiveness and communication skills in distressed couples, it employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, follow-up, and a control group.

Settings and conduct
“The study was conducted after obtaining the necessary approvals from Sayyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi University and the university ethics committee followed by securing informed consent from the participants.”

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
The study population included all couples with marital conflict who visited counseling centers in Hamedan in 2025. A total of 66 couples meeting the inclusion criteria were selected through purposive sampling from six centers. They were then randomly assigned to three groups: Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy, Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy, and a control group (22 couples in each).

Intervention groups
Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy Control Group

Main outcome variables
Emotional Expressiveness and Communication Skills

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20180627040264N2**
Registration date: **2025-12-02, 1404/09/11**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2025-12-02, 1404/09/11**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2025-12-02, 1404/09/11

Registrant information

Name
Alireza Karimpour-Vazifehkhorani

Name of organization / entity

Country
Iran (Islamic Republic of)

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+98 41 5262 1249

Email address
a.karimpour92@gmail.com

Recruitment status
Recruitment complete

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2025-12-20, 1404/09/29

Expected recruitment end date
2026-02-19, 1404/11/30

Actual recruitment start date
empty

Actual recruitment end date
empty

Trial completion date
empty

Scientific title
Comparing the Effectiveness of Emotionally Focused and Cognitive–Behavioral Couple Therapies in Enhancing Emotional Expressiveness and Communication Skills

among Distressed Couples

Public title
Comparing the Effectiveness of Emotionally Focused and Cognitive–Behavioral Couple Therapies in Enhancing Emotional Expressiveness and Communication Skills
Purpose
Education/Guidance
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria:
Having a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 15 years of marital life; signing a written informed consent form to participate in the study; not having received psychological treatments prior to entering the study; ability to maintain a stable type and dosage of any medications used during the study; having at least a high school diploma; and not having schizophrenia spectrum disorders or substance abuse.
Exclusion criteria:
Irregular attendance in intervention sessions and separation from one another during the intervention period.
Age
No age limit
Gender
Both

Phase
N/A
Groups that have been masked
No information
Sample size
Target sample size: **66**
Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized
Randomization description
Participants were allocated to one of the two intervention groups at a 1:1 ratio using a computer-generated random sequence with variable block sizes (4 and 6), stratified by the severity of marital discord and the duration of marital life. The allocation sequence was kept in sequentially numbered, opaque, sealed envelopes, which were opened by an independent individual.
Blinding (investigator's opinion)
Not blinded
Blinding description
Placebo
Not used
Assignment
Other
Other design features

Secondary Ids

empty

Ethics committees

1

Ethics committee
Name of ethics committee
The Ethics Committee of Sayyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi University
Street address
Asadabad – Sheikh Kazem Hamzehei Boulevard – Shahid Rezaeian Boulevard, Sayyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi University
City
Asadabad
Province
Hamadan
Postal code
6541853096
Approval date
2025-09-21, 1404/06/30
Ethics committee reference number
IR.SJAU.REC.1404.006

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Distressed Couples
ICD-10 code
ICD-10 code description

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Emotional expressiveness refers to the outward display of emotion regardless of its valence (positive or negative) or modality (facial, verbal, or bodily expression). It is influenced by social interactions and interpersonal relationships with family members and others.
Timepoint
Pretest, post-test, follow-up
Method of measurement
Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire by King and Emmons

2

Description
Communication skills
Timepoint
Pretest, post-test, follow-up
Method of measurement
Communication Skills Questionnaire by Queen Dom

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description
Intervention group: 1. Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy 2. Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy

Category
Behavior

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
Hayat counseling center
Full name of responsible person
Javad Kazemi
Street address
“Asadabad – Sheikh Kazem Hamzehei Boulevard – Shahid Rezaeian Boulevard, Sayyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi University.
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m.khabazi@sjau.ac.ir

Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor
Name of organization / entity
Sayyed Jamaladin Asadabadi University
Full name of responsible person
Malihe Khabazi
Street address
“Asadabad – Sheikh Kazem Hamzehei Boulevard – Shahid Rezaeian Boulevard, Sayyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi University.
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Grant name
Grant code / Reference number
Is the source of funding the same sponsor organization/entity?
Yes
Title of funding source
Sayyed Jamaladin Asadabadi University
Proportion provided by this source
10
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
Sayyed Jamaladin Asadabadi University
Full name of responsible person
Malihe Khabazi
Position
Faculty member
Latest degree
Ph.D.
Other areas of specialty/work
counseling and psychology
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Person responsible for scientific inquiries

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Person responsible for updating data

Contact

Name of organization / entity
Sayyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi University

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Sharing plan

Deidentified Individual Participant Data Set (IPD)
No - There is not a plan to make this available

Justification/reason for indecision/not sharing IPD
In this study, all participant information was collected and stored confidentially in full accordance with ethical research principles. Each participant was assigned an anonymous identification code, and no names or personal identifiers were recorded in the data files.

Study Protocol
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Statistical Analysis Plan
Not applicable

Informed Consent Form
No - There is not a plan to make this available

Clinical Study Report
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Analytic Code
Not applicable

Data Dictionary
Not applicable