Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

Investigating the effect of self-discipline educational therapy program on self-criticism, internalized shame, and perfectionism in students with anxiety.

Protocol summary

Study aim
Investigating the effect of self-discipline educational therapy program on self-criticism, internalized shame, and perfectionism in students with anxiety

Design
A clinical trial with an intervention group and a control group, with parallel groups, unblinded, randomized, with pre-test and post-test, on 30 people, was used for randomization by lottery.

Settings and conduct
The experimental group will receive self-discipline training; but the control group will not receive any intervention. Both the experimental and control groups will be measured twice (pre-test-post-test) separately through anxiety questionnaires, perfectionism, self-criticism levels scale, and internal shame scale. The statistical population will include all students with anxiety. It will be implemented in Ahvaz city and will last for 14 sessions (two sessions per week).

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Entry requirements: 1- Having a score above the cut-off point on the Beck Anxiety Inventory. 2- Being employed in undergraduate or graduate studies at a university. 3- Having a written consent to attend educational-therapeutic sessions and complete the questionnaires. Exclusion requirements: 1- Having a diagnosis of severe disorders such as psychosis, bipolar disorder, or substance abuse that prevents effective attendance at sessions. 2- The participant is currently undergoing a similar psychological treatment course (e.g., CBT or schema therapy) or active medication that affects the results of the study. 3- Suffering from chronic physical or neurological diseases that prevent attendance or concentration in educational-therapeutic sessions.

Intervention groups
The experimental group will receive a self-training therapy program. The control group will not receive any intervention.

Main outcome variables
Self-centeredness, self-criticism, internalized shame, perfectionism, anxiety

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20250915067258N1**
Registration date: **2025-09-19, 1404/06/28**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2025-09-19, 1404/06/28**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2025-09-19, 1404/06/28

Registrant information

Name
Fatemeh Zahra Navaser

Name of organization / entity

Country
Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Phone
+98 61 3334 5147

Email address
fatemeh.navaser@iau.ir

Recruitment status
Recruitment complete

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2025-10-02, 1404/07/10

Expected recruitment end date
2025-12-01, 1404/09/10

Actual recruitment start date

empty

Actual recruitment end date

empty

Trial completion date

empty

Scientific title

Investigating the effect of self-discipline educational therapy program on self-criticism, internalized shame, and perfectionism in students with anxiety.

Public title

Investigating the effect of self-discipline educational therapy program on self-criticism, internalized shame, and perfectionism in students with anxiety.

Purpose

Education/Guidance

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:

Having a score above the cutoff point on the Beck Anxiety Inventory Pursuing undergraduate or graduate studies at a university. Having written consent to attend educational-therapeutic sessions and complete questionnaires.

Exclusion criteria:

aving a diagnosis of a severe disorder, such as psychosis, bipolar disorder, or substance abuse, that prevents effective attendance at meetings. The participant is currently undergoing a similar psychological treatment course (CBT or schema therapy) or active medication, which affects the results of the study. aving chronic physical or neurological diseases that prevent attendance or concentration in educational-therapeutic sessions.

Age

No age limit

Gender

Both

Phase

N/A

Groups that have been masked

No information

Sample size

Target sample size: **30**

Randomization (investigator's opinion)

Randomized

Randomization description

It will be done through a simple randomization method. According to this method, the names of each selected member of the research sample are written on pieces of paper and placed in a box for a draw. Then, the pieces of paper are drawn one by one. The first 15 individuals (1 to 15) will be part of the experimental group, and the next 15 individuals (16to 30) whose names are drawn from the box will be the members of the control group.

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

The Ethics Committee in Research of Islamic Azad University - Ahvaz Branch

Street address

South Kargar Boulevard؛ Farhang Shahr؛ Golestan Highway

City

Ahvaz

Province

Khouzestan

Postal code

6134937333

Approval date

2025-08-27, 1404/06/05

Ethics committee reference number

IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1404.433

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied

Anxiety disorder

ICD-10 code

F41.9

ICD-10 code description

Anxiety disorder, unspecified

Primary outcomes

1

Description

Perfectionism

Timepoint

Measurements will be conducted at pre-test, post-test, and three-month follow-up after the post-test

Method of measurement

Hill et al.'s Perfectionism Questionnaire (2004)

2

Description

Anxiety

Timepoint

Measurements will be conducted at pre-test, post-test, and three-month follow-up after the post-test

Method of measurement

BAI- Beck Anxiety Inventory

3

Description
Self-criticism
Timepoint
Measurements will be conducted at pre-test, post-test, and three-month follow-up after the post-test
Method of measurement
Levels of Self-Criticism Scale

4

Description
Internal Shame
Timepoint
Measurements will be conducted at pre-test, post-test, and three-month follow-up after the post-test
Method of measurement
Internal Shame Scale

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description
Intervention group: The intervention group will participate in a 14-session educational program (each session lasting 60 minutes, held twice a week). Sessions are conducted in groups. Session 1: Introduction and psychoeducationGoal: Introduce the treatment framework, build motivation, and establish group trust.Content: Introduction of the therapist and group members; explanation of the concept of self-compassion and its role in reducing anxiety, self-criticism, and shame; outlining the structure and rules of the sessions.Homework: Write down situations during the week in which they criticized themselves. Session 2: Understanding self-criticismGoal: Increase awareness of the inner critic voice.Content: Identifying common patterns of self-criticism; discussing the difference between “self-criticism” and “healthy self-correction.”Homework: Record daily self-critical instances and emotional reactions. Session 3: The concept of shame and internalized shameGoal: Understand the role of shame in anxiety and perfectionism.Content: Defining shame and distinguishing it from guilt; exploring the impact of internalized shame on relationships and self-esteem.Homework: Write about an experience of shame and the feelings associated with it. Session 4: Introduction to mindfulnessGoal: Learn to stay present to reduce rumination.Content: Mindful breathing practice; non-judgmental awareness of thoughts and emotions.Homework: Daily mindful breathing practice (5 minutes). Session 5: Three components of self-compassionGoal: Teach the foundations of self-compassion (Neff, 2003).Content: Self-kindness; common humanity; mindfulness.Homework: Write kind sentences to oneself during anxious moments. Session 6: Working with self-criticismGoal: Transform the inner critic voice into a supportive one.Content: Imaginary dialogue with the inner critic; replacing critical statements with compassionate ones.Homework: Practice writing a “self-compassionate letter.” Session 7: Self-acceptance vs. perfectionismGoal: Reduce pressure caused by unrealistic standards.Content: Exploring myths of perfectionism; teaching acceptance of mistakes as part of growth.Homework: Engage in one activity without striving for perfection and record the experience. Session 8: Self-compassion exercises in anxietyGoal: Apply self-compassion during moments of anxiety.Content: Teaching the “Self-Compassion Break”; practicing soothing phrases during anxiety.Homework: Use the “Self-Compassion Break” in an anxiety-provoking situation and record the experience. Session 9: Restructuring dysfunctional beliefsGoal: Identify and modify irrational beliefs about self-worth.Content: Identifying beliefs such as “If I’m not perfect, I’m worthless”; practicing replacing them with compassionate beliefs.Homework: Record three irrational thoughts daily and reframe them with a self-compassionate perspective. Session 10: Social shame and relationshipsGoal: Reduce fear of judgment and increase social acceptance.Content: Working with shame-inducing social situations; practicing “compassionate imagery.”Homework: Gradual exposure to an anxiety-provoking social situation while using self-compassionate phrases. Session 11: Inner–outer compassion practiceGoal: Extend compassion to self and others.Content: Practicing Loving-Kindness Meditation; exploring the connection between self-compassion and compassion for others.Homework: Write a kind message to a friend or family member. Session 12: Self-compassion in failureGoal: Learn compassionate coping with academic/personal failures.Content: Reviewing experiences of failure; applying the three components of self-compassion to failure.Homework: Write about a failure experience and reframe it with a self-compassionate approach. Session 13: Integration of skillsGoal: Review and consolidate learned skills.Content: Revisiting exercises from all sessions; designing a “personal self-compassion toolbox.”Homework: Apply all three core skills (self-kindness, mindfulness, common humanity) together throughout the week. Session 14: Conclusion and terminationGoal: Reinforce changes and prepare for continuation after treatment.Content: Summarizing key concepts; sharing personal experiences; planning for ongoing practice.Homework: Write a “letter to my future self” to remind oneself of the learned skills.
Category
Behavior

2

Description
Control group: They receive no training.
Category
N/A

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center

Name of recruitment center
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz

Full name of responsible person
Shahram Lak

Street address
South Kargar Boulevard, Farhang Shahr District; Golestan Highway

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6134937333

Phone
+98 61 3334 8421

Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor

Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University

Full name of responsible person
Pejman Taghipour Birgani

Street address
South Kargar Boulevard; Farhang Shahr District; Golestan Highway

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6134937333

Phone
+98 61 3334 8421

Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Grant name

Grant code / Reference number

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

Title of funding source
Islamic Azad University

Proportion provided by this source
100

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
Islamic Azad University

Full name of responsible person
Fatemeh Zahra Navaser

Position
Student

Latest degree
Bachelor

Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology

Street address
Unit 1, No. 95, Ferdowsi Building, Khanasari Intersection, Mustafaei Street

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6175445854

Phone
+98 61 3334 5147

Email
fatemeh.navaser@iau.ir

Person responsible for scientific inquiries

Contact

Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University

Full name of responsible person
Reza Joharifard

Position
Associate professor

Latest degree
Ph.D.

Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology

Street address
South Kargar Boulevard; Farhang Shahr District; Golestan Highway

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6134937333

Phone
+98 61 3334 8421

Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Person responsible for updating data

Contact

Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University

Full name of responsible person
Fatemeh Zahra Navaser
Position
Student
Latest degree
Bachelor
Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology
Street address
Unit 1, No. 95, Ferdowsi Building, Khanasari Intersection, Mustafaei Street
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
6175445854
Phone
+98 61 3334 5147
Email
fatemeh.navaser@iau.ir

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
Not applicable
Data Dictionary
Not applicable
Title and more details about the data/document
Only part of the data, such as information related to the primary outcome or similar, can be shared.
When the data will become available and for how long
Access period begins 6 months after publication of results.
To whom data/document is available
The data will only be accessible to researchers affiliated with academic or scientific institutions
Under which criteria data/document could be used
Any type of analysis is permitted on the delivered data
From where data/document is obtainable
En Via email: fatemeh.navaser@iau.ir
What processes are involved for a request to access data/document
The data will be sent after emailing fatemeh Zahra navaserand receiving approval from the research team members.
Comments