Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

10 Jun 2026

Comparing the effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy and emotion-focused therapy on test anxiety, self-efficacy, academic procrastination, and academic self-handicapping in ninth-grade male students with test anxiety

Protocol summary

Study aim
Comparing the effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy and emotion-focused therapy on test anxiety, self-efficacy, academic procrastination, and academic self-handicapping in ninth-grade male students with test anxiety

Design
A controlled clinical trial with parallel groups, without blinding, randomized, on 60 patients. The rand function of Excel software will be used for randomization.

Settings and conduct
The statistical population of the present study consists of all male students with exam anxiety in the ninth grade of Ahvaz who are studying in the academic year 2025-2026. In the sample selection stage, the convenience sampling method is used. After selecting the samples to a volume of 60 people based on the study's entry and exit criteria, the participants will be randomly assigned to three groups: "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Therapy" (Intervention Group 1), "Emotion-Focused Therapy" (Intervention Group 2), and "Waiting List" (Control Group).

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria: Ninth grade male students, scoring one standard deviation above the mean in test anxiety
Exclusion criteria: Unwillingness to participate in the research, participating in other psychotherapy sessions

Intervention groups
Intervention group 1: All individuals who will receive the mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy intervention. Intervention group 2: All individuals who will receive the emotion-focused therapy intervention. Control group: All individuals who will not receive any intervention.

Main outcome variables
Test anxiety, self-efficacy, academic procrastination, academic self-handicapping

General information

Reason for update
Acronym
IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260512069378N1**
Registration date: **2026-05-13, 1405/02/23**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2026-05-13, 1405/02/23**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2026-05-13, 1405/02/23

Registrant information
Name
Heydar Saedi
Name of organization / entity
Country
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
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+98 61 3672 2192
Email address
haydar.saedi@yahoo.com

Recruitment status
recruiting
Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2026-06-05, 1405/03/15
Expected recruitment end date
2026-06-21, 1405/03/31
Actual recruitment start date
empty
Actual recruitment end date
empty
Trial completion date

empty

Scientific title
Comparing the effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy and emotion-focused therapy on test anxiety, self-efficacy, academic procrastination, and academic self-handicapping in ninth-grade male students with test anxiety

Public title
Evaluating the effectiveness of two interventions: mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy and emotion-focused therapy on test anxiety and related outcomes in students

Purpose
Treatment

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria:
Ninth grade male students Scored one standard deviation above the average in test anxiety
Exclusion criteria:
Unwillingness to participate in research Participation in other psychotherapy sessions

Age
From **14 years** old to **15 years** old

Gender
Male

Phase
N/A

Groups that have been masked
No information

Sample size
Target sample size: **60**

Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized

Randomization description
The study population of the present research consists of all ninth-grade male students with test anxiety who are studying in the 2025-2026 academic year. In this type of efficacy studies, a two-stage approach is usually used: in the sample selection stage, the convenience sampling method is used. After selecting the samples with a size of 60 based on the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria, the participants will be randomly assigned to three groups: "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction" (intervention group 1), "Emotion-Focused Therapy" (intervention group 2), and "waitlist" (control group). Randomization will be performed using block randomization with variable block sizes (4 and 6 participants) by an independent statistician who is not involved in the implementation process. The random allocation list will be generated using the RAND function in Excel software and then placed in opaque, sealed, and numbered envelopes so that the researcher and participants are unaware of the allocation sequence (allocation concealment). Opening the envelope and informing each participant of the assigned group will be done only at the time of entering the study. To ensure equality of baseline variables (such as anxiety level and age), their distribution in the two groups will be examined at the statistical analysis stage.

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 Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz Branch

Street address
Opposite Keshavarz Street, Farhang Shahr, Golestan Highway

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6134937333

Approval date
2026-04-15, 1405/01/26

Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1405.039

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Anxiety

ICD-10 code
F40

ICD-10 code description
Phobic anxiety disorders

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Test Anxiety

Timepoint
1. Pre-test (before the start of the intervention) 2. Post-test (immediately after the end of the intervention period) 3. One-month follow-up after the intervention

Method of measurement
The variable will be measured using the Ahvaz Exam Anxiety Inventory by Abolghasemi et al. (1996).

2

Description

Self-Efficacy

Timepoint

1. Pre-test (before the start of the intervention) 2. Post-test (immediately after the end of the intervention period) 3. One-month follow-up after the intervention

Method of measurement

The variable will be measured using the Morris et al. (2001) self-efficacy questionnaire.

3

Description

Academic Procrastination

Timepoint

1. Pre-test (before the start of the intervention) 2. Post-test (immediately after the end of the intervention period) 3. One-month follow-up after the intervention

Method of measurement

The variable will be measured using the Savari Academic Procrastination Questionnaire (2011).

4

Description

Academic Self-Handicapping

Timepoint

1. Pre-test (before the start of the intervention) 2. Post-test (immediately after the end of the intervention period) 3. One-month follow-up after the intervention

Method of measurement

The variable will be measured using the Schwinger and Steinsmeier-Plaster (2011) Academic Self-Disability Scale.

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description

Intervention group: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction therapy; duration of each session: 90 minutes; total number of sessions: 8 sessions; session sequence: twice a week; therapeutic tools used: this intervention relies on training in mindfulness, acceptance, nonjudgmental observation of internal experiences, and formal and informal mindfulness practices. The main therapeutic tools include: body awareness practice; body scan practice; mindful breathing practice; seated meditation practice; mindful stretching and movement exercises; mindfulness exercises in daily activities; training in accepting thoughts and emotions without engagement and judgment. The content of the various sessions is based on this: session one: getting acquainted with group members, introducing the treatment program, explaining the concept of mindfulness, stress and its relationship with test anxiety, and conducting the pre-test; session two: training attention to breathing and body awareness practice, bodily awareness and beginning the body scan practice; session three: continuation of the body scan practice, focusing on observing thoughts and feelings without judgment and training attention to return to the present moment; session four: training seated meditation, focusing on sounds, breathing and thoughts, and practicing acceptance of mental experiences; session five: training mindful movements and stretches, increasing bodily awareness in movement and practicing mindfulness in daily activities; session six: working with unpleasant thoughts and emotions, training to observe thoughts as mental events and reducing cognitive engagement; session seven: review and practice of learned skills, generalizing mindfulness to stressful situations, especially exam situations; session eight: summarizing the sessions, reviewing the exercises, providing final recommendations, conducting the post-test and determining the time for the follow-up test.

Category

Treatment - Other

2

Description

Intervention group: Emotion-Focused Therapy; duration of each session: 90 minutes; total number of sessions: 8 sessions; session sequence: twice a week; therapeutic tools used: This intervention is based on identifying, experiencing, and regulating emotions, reducing emotional avoidance, and improving the processing of maladaptive emotions. The main therapeutic tools include teaching emotional awareness, expressing emotions, emotion processing, emotion regulation, and adaptive coping strategies. The content of the various sessions is based on this: session one: getting acquainted with group members, introducing the treatment program, providing an overall explanation of emotion-focused therapy, and conducting the pre-test; session two: identifying and labeling emotions and examining emotions related to test anxiety; session three: teaching experiencing and accepting the core emotions and reducing emotional avoidance; session four: working on thoughts and emotional meanings and practicing adaptive emotional expression; session five: teaching emotion regulation strategies and relaxation techniques; session six: identifying maladaptive patterns and practicing new emotional responses; session seven: reviewing skills and generalizing them to stressful situations, especially exam situations; session eight: summarizing the sessions, reviewing the exercises, conducting the post-test, and determining the time for follow-up.

Category

Treatment - Other

3

Description

Control group: The control group will not receive any intervention during the research, but will receive interventions after data collection to prevent factors that threaten the internal validity of the research, such as compensatory competition in the control group or demoralization.

Category
Treatment - Other

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
Ahvaz Education Department Consulting Center
Full name of responsible person
Heydar Saedi
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Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor
Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University
Full name of responsible person
Aslan Egdarnezhad
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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
Islamic Azad University
Proportion provided by this source
100
Public or private sector
Private
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
Heydar Saedi
Position
Ph.D. student
Latest degree
Master
Other areas of specialty/work
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Person responsible for updating data

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Sharing plan

Deidentified Individual Participant Data Set (IPD)
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

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
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be 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