Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

07 Nov 2026

The effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral couples therapy on modifying communication beliefs and reducing marital burnout in couples seeking divorce

Protocol summary

Study aim
The effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral couples therapy on modifying communication beliefs and reducing marital burnout in couples seeking divorce

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 study will include all couples applying for divorce who refer to family counseling centers affiliated with the Dezful County Court during the research period. In the sample selection stage, convenience sampling method will be used. After selecting the samples to a volume of 60 people (30 couples) based on the research entry and exit criteria, the participants will be randomly assigned to two groups: "cognitive-behavioral couples therapy" (intervention group) and "waiting list" (control group).

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria: Couples between the ages of 30 and 40, minimum marriage duration of 5 years; above-average scores on standard scales measuring marital burnout. Exclusion criteria: Unwillingness to participate in the study; participation in other psychotherapy sessions concurrently with the study.

Intervention groups
Intervention group: All couples who will receive the cognitive-behavioral therapy intervention. Control group: All couples who will not receive any intervention.

Main outcome variables
Relationship beliefs; marital burnout

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260602069625N1**
Registration date: **2026-06-20, 1405/03/30**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2026-06-20, 1405/03/30**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2026-06-20, 1405/03/30

Registrant information

Name
Azadeh Tirian

Name of organization / entity

Country
Iran (Islamic Republic of)

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+98 61 4333 3333

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azadeh.tirian@iau.ir

Recruitment status
Recruitment complete

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2026-07-06, 1405/04/15

Expected recruitment end date
2026-07-22, 1405/04/31

Actual recruitment start date
empty

Actual recruitment end date
empty

Trial completion date
empty

Scientific title
The effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral couples therapy on modifying communication beliefs and

reducing marital burnout in couples seeking divorce

Public title
Effectiveness of CBCT on Marital Burnout and Communication Beliefs
Purpose
Education/Guidance
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria:
Couples between the ages of 30 and 40 Minimum marriage duration of 5 years Achieving above average scores on standard scales measuring marital burnout
Exclusion criteria:
Unwillingness to participate in research Participating in other psychotherapy sessions concurrently with the research
Age
From **30 years** old to **40 years** old
Gender
Both

Phase
N/A
Groups that have been masked
No information
Sample size
Target sample size: **60**
Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized
Randomization description
The statistical population of the research will include all couples seeking divorce who visit family counseling centers affiliated with the courts during the research implementation period. In the sampling stage, a convenience sampling method will be utilized. Following the selection of samples to a volume of 60 participants (30 couples) based on the research inclusion and exclusion criteria, participants will be randomly assigned into two groups: 'Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy' (intervention group) and 'Waitlist' (control group). Randomization will be performed using the variable block randomization method (with block sizes of 4 and 6) by an independent statistician who has no involvement in the implementation process. The random allocation list will be generated using the RAND function in Excel software and subsequently placed in numbered, opaque, and sealed envelopes to ensure that neither the researcher nor the participants are aware of the allocation sequence (allocation concealment). The opening of the envelopes and knowledge of the group allocation will only take place at the time of each participant's entry into the research. To ensure the equality of baseline variables (such as age and marriage duration), their distribution in the two groups will be examined during 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, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch
Street address
Opposite Keshavarz Street, Farhang Shahr, Golestan Highway
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
6134937333
Approval date
2026-04-11, 1405/01/22
Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1405.021

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Marital Burnout
ICD-10 code
Z63.0
ICD-10 code description
Problems in relationship with spouse or partner

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Relationship Beliefs
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 measurement method will be the Romans and DeBoard (1995) Communication Beliefs Questionnaire.

2

Description
Marital Burnout
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 method of measurement will be Pines marital exhaustion questionnaire (1996).

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description

Intervention group: Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy intervention; Duration of each session: 90 minutes; Total number of sessions: 8 sessions; Sequence of sessions: twice a week; Therapeutic tools used: This intervention focuses on modifying dysfunctional thought patterns and reconstructing interactive behaviors. The main therapeutic tools include: cognitive restructuring, communication skills training, problem solving, emotional management; Session content: First session: administering a pre-test, creating a therapeutic alliance, teaching a cognitive-behavioral model in the relationship, and explaining the goal of the treatment (modifying communication beliefs). Second session: Identifying self-awareness; Identifying automatic thought patterns and fundamental beliefs (which lead to marital burnout). Session 3: Teaching basic communication skills; practicing the "active listening" technique and correcting communication misunderstandings (preventing defensive behaviors). Session 4: Cognitive restructuring; using the "Socratic questioning" technique to challenge false beliefs about your partner and correct unrealistic expectations. Session 5: Conflict management; teaching techniques for calming down and controlling emotions in critical moments to prevent burnout from escalating. Session 6: Teaching problem-solving skills; practical steps for facing common challenges and replacing destructive behaviors with constructive behaviors. Session 7: Strengthening the emotional bond; exercises related to expressing emotions using the "My Message" method and rebuilding positive behaviors in daily interactions. Session 8: Summarizing the sessions, consolidating the skills learned, presenting plans to prevent the return of old patterns, conducting a post-test, and determining the time for the follow-up test.

Category

Treatment - Other

2

Description

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

Category

Treatment - Other

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center

Name of recruitment center
Consulting Center Affiliated with the Dezful City Justice Department

Full name of responsible person
Azadeh Tirian

Street address
Between Dadgostari St. and Khabarnegar St., Ghanoun St., 15 Khordad Blvd., Shohada-ye Artesh Blvd.

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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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Opposite Keshavarz Street, Farhang Shahr, Golestan Highway

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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
Azadeh Tirian

Position
Master's student

Latest degree
Bachelor

Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology

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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