Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

The effectiveness of emotionally focused family therapy (EFFT) on socio-emotional adjustment, psychological distress, and academic performance of elementary school students of divorced parents in Abadan County

Protocol summary

Study aim
The general aim of the present study is to determine the effectiveness of emotion-focused family therapy (EFFT) on emotional-social adjustment, psychological distress, and academic performance in elementary school students with parental divorce in abadan county.

Design
A randomized controlled clinical trial with groups assigned using a random number table.

Settings and conduct
This study will be conducted in abadan county among elementary school students with parental divorce who meet the inclusion criteria (children of divorce and psychological distress). after selecting 30 volunteers, they will be randomly assigned to two groups of 15 participants (experimental and control). given the nature of the intervention, blinding will not be implemented in this study. the experimental group will receive the emotion-focused family therapy (efft) intervention, and the control group will remain on a waiting list. data will be collected by questionnaire at the pretest and posttest stages.

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Among elementary school students in abadan county with experience of parental divorce who will refer to the counseling center of the department of education of this county in 2026 and, based on counselors' opinions, are diagnosed as having psychological distress and obtain a score of 20 or higher (cutoff) on the psychological distress questionnaire by kessler and colleagues (2002), 60 individuals will be identified. then, 30 students will be selected voluntarily, with consideration of other inclusion and exclusion criteria, and will be randomly assigned to two groups of 15 participants (experimental and control).

Intervention groups
The experimental group will receive the Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) intervention, while the control group will not receive any intervention.

Main outcome variables
The level of psychological distress among students

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20200722048168N16**
Registration date: **2026-08-29, 1405/06/07**
Registration timing: **registered_while_recruiting**

Last update: **2026-08-29, 1405/06/07**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2026-08-29, 1405/06/07

Registrant information

Name
Amir Amiri

Name of organization / entity

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Iran (Islamic Republic of)

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Recruitment status
Recruitment complete

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2026-08-15, 1405/05/24

Expected recruitment end date
2026-08-31, 1405/06/09

Actual recruitment start date
empty

Actual recruitment end date
empty
Trial completion date
empty

Scientific title
The effectiveness of emotionally focused family therapy (EFFT) on socio-emotional adjustment, psychological distress, and academic performance of elementary school students of divorced parents in Abadan County

Public title
The effectiveness of emotionally focused family therapy (EFFT) on socio-emotional adjustment, psychological distress, and academic performance
Purpose
Education/Guidance
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria:
Being a child of divorce Obtaining a score of 20 or higher (cutoff) on the psychological distress questionnaire by kessler and colleagues (2002) Minimum age: 7 years; Maximum age: 12 years
Exclusion criteria:
Having severe psychiatric disorders based on medical records or self-report. Simultaneous participation in other similar educational or therapeutic programs.
Age
From **7 years** old to **12 years** old
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
First, a list of all eligible participants who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the study will be prepared. The sample size will be selected, and the participants will be randomly allocated to two groups of 15 participants each: an intervention group and a control group. Each participant will then be assigned an identification code according to the order of enrollment. The identification codes will be assigned sequentially, starting from 001. After the participant list is finalized, an independent researcher who will not be involved in participant recruitment, intervention delivery, or outcome assessment will be responsible for conducting the randomization. For this purpose, a random number table will be used to determine the random sequence of the participants' identification codes. Specifically, numbers will be selected sequentially from a predetermined point in the random number table, and the numbers corresponding to the participants' identification codes will be extracted. Repeated numbers or numbers outside the range of the participants' identification codes will be discarded, and this process will continue until all participant codes are arranged in a random, non-repeated sequence. According to the 1:1 allocation ratio, among the 30 participants, the first 15 codes in the randomized sequence will be assigned to the intervention group, and the remaining 15 codes will be assigned to the control group. For example, if the randomized sequence is 018, 004, 027, 011, and so forth, the codes appearing in the first half of the sequence will be assigned to the intervention group, while those appearing in the second half will be assigned to the control group. Therefore, each participant's assignment to the intervention or control group will be determined according to the randomized position of their identification code in the allocation sequence, rather than on the basis of individual characteristics, order of enrollment, researcher judgment, or participant preference. After the allocation sequence is finalized, the group assignment for each participant will be placed in an opaque, sealed, sequentially numbered envelope, and the envelopes will be arranged according to the participants' identification codes. Each participant's envelope will be opened only after completion of the baseline assessment and final confirmation of enrollment in the study, at which point the assigned group will be revealed. Thus, the person responsible for the baseline assessment will remain unaware of the participant's group assignment until completion of the enrollment process. This procedure will be implemented to maintain allocation concealment, prevent prediction of subsequent group assignments, and minimize the potential for selection bias.
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
Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch, Farhang Shahr, Golestan Expressway, Ahvaz, Iran
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Approval date
2026-05-23, 1405/03/02

Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1405.117

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
psychological distress
ICD-10 code
ICD-10 code description

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Score of psychological distress on the Kessler et al. (2002) Psychological Distress Questionnaire
Timepoint
Before and after implementing the Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) intervention
Method of measurement
The 10-item Kessler et al. (2002) Psychological Distress Questionnaire

Secondary outcomes

1

Description
Emotional-social adjustment score
Timepoint
Before and after implementing the Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) intervention
Method of measurement
The 60-item Sinha and Singh (1993) Student Adjustment Questionnaire

2

Description
Academic performance score
Timepoint
Before and after implementing the Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) intervention
Method of measurement
The 60-item Dortaj (2004) Academic Performance Questionnaire

Intervention groups

1

Description
Intervention Group: Participants will receive Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) based on Johnson's (2004) approach in 12 sessions of 60 minutes each, conducted twice weekly by a trained therapist. The intervention focuses on identifying negative interaction cycles, accessing and processing primary emotions, restructuring family interactions, expressing attachment needs, enhancing emotionally responsive communication, reducing family conflicts, and consolidating therapeutic gains with relapse prevention strategies.
Category
Rehabilitation

2

Description
Control group: Participants in this group will not receive any psychological intervention related to the study during the research period (6 weeks) and will only be assessed at the pretest and posttest stages.
Category
Rehabilitation

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch
Full name of responsible person
Hadis Shokhm Zan
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Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch, Farhang Shahr, Golestan Expressway, Ahvaz, Iran
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Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor
Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University
Full name of responsible person
Aslan Igadarnezhad
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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

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

Hadis Shokhm Zan

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)

No - There is not a plan to make this available

Justification/reason for indecision/not sharing IPD

Compliance with ethical research standards and ensuring participant data confidentiality.

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

No - There is not a plan to make this available

Title and more details about the data/document

As a Master's thesis

When the data will become available and for how

long

From 2026/09/23 onwards

To whom data/document is available

Other contributors

Under which criteria data/document could be used

To advance scientific knowledge and address existing research gaps

From where data/document is obtainable

Thesis Office, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch

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

Referring to the Vice Presidency for Research of Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch to obtain the relevant permit, followed by referring to the Thesis Office

Comments