Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

The effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on competitive anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and motivation for athletes' progress.

Protocol summary

Study aim
Determining the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on competitive anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and motivation for progress in athletes

Design
This study is a randomized, double-blind, parallel-group clinical trial conducted on 30 female athletes from Izeh city (15 in each group). The sample allocation is done by simple random method using the RAND function in Excel software; first, each participant receives an identification code and is divided into two groups of 15 based on a random number.

Settings and conduct
This research will use a field experimental research method and an extensive pre-test and post-test design. The research will be conducted at Masih Counseling Center in Izeh. All participants, clinical caregivers, and evaluators who interpret the data will be kept confidential and all information will be kept anonymous.

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Entry Criteria Age between 18 and 35 years. Professional athletes. Minimum of three years of professional experience in the respective sports field. Informed consent to participate in the research. Exclusion Criteria Presence of physical illnesses that may interfere with the treatment process. Use of psychiatric medications. History of substance or psychotropic drug use.

Intervention groups
Intervention group: Cognitive-behavioral intervention based on the therapeutic protocol of Khodabakhsh Pirkalani and Rahim Jamarouni (2014) is implemented in a group setting in 12 90-minute sessions, one session per week. Control group: Do not receive any intervention.

Main outcome variables
Competitive anxiety; fear of negative evaluation; motivation to progress.

General information

Reason for update
Acronym
IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260802070505N1**
Registration date: **2026-09-04, 1405/06/13**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2026-09-04, 1405/06/13**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2026-09-04, 1405/06/13

Registrant information
Name
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Name of organization / entity
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Recruitment status
Recruitment complete
Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2026-09-20, 1405/06/29
Expected recruitment end date
2026-10-06, 1405/07/14
Actual recruitment start date
empty
Actual recruitment end date
empty
Trial completion date
empty

Scientific title
The effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on competitive anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and motivation for athletes' progress.

Public title
The effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on competitive anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and motivation for progress.

Purpose
Education/Guidance

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:
Age between 18 and 35 years. Professional athletes. Minimum of three years of professional experience in the respective sports field. Informed consent to participate in the research.

Exclusion criteria:
Presence of physical illnesses that may interfere with the treatment process. Use of psychiatric medications. History of substance or psychotropic drug use.

Age
From **18 years** old to **35 years** old

Gender
Female

Phase
N/A

Groups that have been masked

- Care provider
- Outcome assessor
- Data analyser

Sample size
Target sample size: **30**

Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized

Randomization description
In this study, a simple randomization method is used to assign participants to two experimental and control groups. The randomization unit in this study is female athletes eligible for entry into the study in Izeh County. First, a complete list of volunteers who have been selected based on the study entry criteria is prepared. Then, each participant is assigned a unique numerical identification code. These codes are entered into the Random Number Generator software and a random number is generated for each individual. After generating these numbers, the participants are sorted in ascending order based on the value of the random number. Then, the individuals are assigned to two groups; sequentially, the first 15 people on the list are assigned to the experimental group and the next 15 people to the control group. With this method, the order of entry into the study and the researcher's knowledge of the participants will not play any role in determining the group. To ensure allocation concealment, the person responsible for entering data and performing the randomization process in the software will be independent of the intervention administrators and study evaluators and will not have access to information about the session implementation process or changes in the allocation of individuals. Participant identification codes will also be kept confidential and separate from their other personal information. Therefore, it will not be possible to predict the assigned group for each participant before the randomization process.

Blinding (investigator's opinion)
Double blinded

Blinding description
In order to control bias and enhance the internal validity of the study, this study was designed with a double-blind protocol; in this way, the coaches/interventionists, outcome assessor, and data analyst will be kept unaware of the allocation of female athletes to the experimental and control groups. In this process, the outcome assessor will collect data (competitive anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and achievement motivation) at all stages of the pretest, posttest, and follow-up, without knowing the participants' assigned group, in order to prevent bias in the measurement; also, all raw data will be provided to the statistical analyst with anonymous codes (such as groups 1 and 2), and the true nature of the groups will not be revealed until the end of the data analysis process. All allocation steps will be performed by an independent person from the research team, and the decoding of the allocation codes will only be done after the final completion of the statistical analyses.

Placebo
Not used

Assignment
Parallel

Other design features

Secondary Ids

empty

Ethics committees

1

Ethics committee

Name of ethics committee
Behbahan Islamic Azad University Ethics Committee

Street address
Shahid Bayani St., Amir Kabir Blvd.

City
بهبهان

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6361713198

Approval date
2026-07-28, 1405/05/06

Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.BEHBAHAN.REC.1405.215

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Anxiety in athletes

ICD-10 code

F41.3

ICD-10 code description

Other mixed anxiety disorders

Primary outcomes

1

Description

Competitive anxiety

Timepoint

before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention

Method of measurement

Competitive AnxietyMartinez Competitive Anxiety Questionnaire (1997)

2

Description

Fear of negative evaluation

Timepoint

before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention

Method of measurement

Watson and Friend Fear of Negative Evaluation Questionnaire (1969)

3

Description

Motivation for progress

Timepoint

before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention

Method of measurement

Hermans Achievement Motivation Questionnaire (1977)

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description

Intervention group: Cognitive-behavioral therapy sessions will be based on the treatment protocol designed by Khodabakhsh Pirkalani and Rahim Jamarouni (2014). The sessions of this intervention will be conducted in 12 90-minute sessions (one session per week) in a group setting for the experimental group. Cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness-based techniques are an approach that aims to identify and modify dysfunctional cognitive patterns, reduce anxiety, and manage physiological and psychological arousal, helping participants manage their reactions to stressful challenges by replacing thought distortions and irrational beliefs with adaptive responses and being present in the present moment. This approach has main educational axes that lead to the promotion of self-regulation, reduction of anxiety, and improvement of emotional control; These axes include: creating a therapeutic alliance and explaining the principles of cognitive-behavioral approach and mindfulness, teaching the cognitive triangle and how thoughts affect emotions and behaviors, teaching progressive muscle relaxation skills based on the tension-relaxation model, identifying and challenging common cognitive distortions, identifying underlying beliefs with the downward arrow technique, implementing systematic mental desensitization steps in anxiety-provoking situations, teaching mindfulness techniques including body scanning and guiding the wandering mind, cultivating sensory focus in the present through sitting and walking meditation, mindfulness focused on mental events and irrational thoughts, teaching techniques of immersion in uncertainty and the time machine to create a realistic perspective, and finally, comprehensive review, preventing relapse, and establishing independence in mood control. The main emphasis of this therapy is to reduce automatic and anxiety-provoking reactions when faced with stressful situations and replace them with rational cognitive processing, non-judgmental awareness, and active control of one's thoughts and behaviors.

Category

Behavior

2

Description

Control group: They do not receive any intervention or treatment.

Category

N/A

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center

Name of recruitment center

Masih Psychology Center

Full name of responsible person

Seyedeh Elham Mousavi Gorabi

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Sponsors / Funding sources

1

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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
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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

Participant data is completely confidential and I do not intend to publish it.

Study Protocol

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

Statistical Analysis Plan

No - There is not a plan to make this available

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

No - There is not a plan to make this available

Data Dictionary

No - There is not a plan to make this available