Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

The effectiveness of schema therapy on appearance anxiety, self-criticism, and body image in overweight women

Protocol summary

Study aim
Determining the effectiveness of schema therapy on appearance anxiety, self-criticism, and body image in overweight women

Design
This study is a randomized, parallel-group, single-blind clinical trial conducted on 30 overweight women in the city of Ahvaz (15 participants per group). Participants are assigned to groups using simple randomization via software; each participant is assigned an identification code, ordered based on a random number, and then divided equally into two groups of 15 (experimental and control).

Settings and conduct
This research will be conducted at the Fanoos-e Rah Counseling Center in Ahvaz. The study population consists of women who are overweight. A single-blind design is employed, wherein the outcome assessor and the data analyst remain unaware of the participants' allocation to the experimental or control groups. To ensure this, information regarding group allocation is provided to them in a coded format; no details concerning the identities of the participants or the specific nature of their group assignment are disclosed to the outcome assessor or the data analyst.

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria: aged between 18 and 45; possessing at least a high school diploma; having a Body Mass Index (BMI) above 25; and being dissatisfied with one's own body image. Exclusion criteria: having a physical illness that could interfere with the treatment process; current use of psychiatric medication; and a history of substance abuse.

Intervention groups
Intervention group: The schema therapy intervention, based on the protocol by Young et al. (2012; translated by Hamidpour & Andouz, 2019), will be administered in eight 45-minute sessions, conducted once a week. Control group: Will not receive any intervention.

Main outcome variables
Appearance anxiety; self-criticism; body image

General information

Reason for update
Acronym
IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260921071145N1**
Registration date: **2026-11-06, 1405/08/15**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2026-11-06, 1405/08/15**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2026-11-06, 1405/08/15

Registrant information
Name
Fatemeh Lorzanganeh
Name of organization / entity
Country
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
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fatemeh.loorzangeneh@gmail.com

Recruitment status
Not yet recruiting
Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2026-12-05, 1405/09/14
Expected recruitment end date
2026-12-20, 1405/09/29
Actual recruitment start date
empty
Actual recruitment end date
empty

Trial completion date
empty

Scientific title
The effectiveness of schema therapy on appearance anxiety, self-criticism, and body image in overweight women

Public title
The effectivenes of schema therapy on appearance anxiety, self-criticism, and body image

Purpose
Education/Guidance

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:
Aged between 18 and 45 years Possess at least a high school diploma Body Mass Index (BMI) above 25 Dissatisfied with their own body image

Exclusion criteria:
Presence of a physical illness that could interfere with the treatment process Use of psychiatric medications History of substance abuse

Age
From **18 years** old to **45 years** old

Gender
Female

Phase
N/A

Groups that have been masked

- Outcome assessor
- Data analyser

Sample size
Target sample size: **30**

Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized

Randomization description
In this study, a simple randomization method was employed to assign participants to either the experimental or the control group. The unit of randomization consisted of women with excess weight who met the study's inclusion criteria in the city of Ahvaz. First, a comprehensive list of volunteers who satisfied the inclusion criteria was compiled. Subsequently, each participant was assigned a unique numerical identification code. These codes were entered into a random number generator software, which produced a random number for each individual. Following the generation of these numbers, the participants were sorted in ascending order based on their assigned random values. Participants were then allocated to the two groups: the first 15 individuals on the sorted list were assigned to the experimental group (receiving schema therapy), while the next 15 were assigned to the control group. Through this method, the order in which participants entered the study and the researcher's prior knowledge of the participants played no role in group assignment. To ensure allocation concealment, the individual responsible for data entry and the randomization process was independent of both the intervention administrator and the assessors of the study variables (appearance-related anxiety, self-criticism, and body image); this individual had no insight into the conduct of the sessions and no authority to alter the group assignments. Furthermore, the participants' identification codes were kept confidential and stored separately from their other personal information. Consequently, it was impossible to predict the group assignment for any participant prior to the completion of the randomization process.

Blinding (investigator's opinion)
Single blinded

Blinding description
To adhere to the principles of blinding, the outcome assessor and the data analyst are kept unaware of the allocation of participants to the experimental and control groups. To this end, information regarding participant group allocation will be provided to them in a coded format, and no information concerning the identities or the specific group assignments of the participants will be disclosed to the outcome assessor or the data analyst.

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

Street address
Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz, Farhang Shahr

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6134937333

Approval date
2026-09-11, 1405/06/20

Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1405.538

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Psychological problems resulting from being overweight

ICD-10 code
E66.9

ICD-10 code description
Obesity, unspecified

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Manifest Anxiety
Timepoint
Before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention
Method of measurement
Vial et al. (2014) Apparent Anxiety Questionnaire

2

Description
Self-criticism
Timepoint
Before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention
Method of measurement
Thompson and Zuroff's (2004) Levels of Self-Criticism Scale

3

Description
Body Image
Timepoint
Before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention
Method of measurement
Ostozin et al.'s (1998) Body Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description
Intervention group: Schema therapy consists of ten 45-minute sessions designed to examine self-destructive patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior rooted in childhood. It integrates principles and foundations from cognitive-behavioral, attachment, Gestalt, object relations, constructivist, and psychoanalytic schools of thought. The first session serves as an introduction, covering the program's goals, the number of sessions, ground rules, and the significance of the educational and research framework; research questionnaires are also administered and collected. The second session is dedicated to completing a commitment form, introducing early maladaptive schemas—including how they form and persist—as well as their associated domains and underlying needs. Participants' specific schemas are categorized, and the application of therapeutic techniques begins. The third session focuses on reviewing previous topics, explaining coping styles, facilitating group discussion, assigning homework, and fostering a dialogue between the hopeful and the hopeless aspects of the mind. In the fourth session, participants develop "healthy" educational cards, utilize the "downward arrow" technique, and review various cognitive techniques. The fifth session involves visualizing a "safe place" and working to transform distressing emotional memories. The sixth session incorporates mindfulness and relaxation techniques, alongside imagined dialogues (mental imagery) with the person or source responsible for the schema. The seventh session centers on writing a letter to the source of the schema, while reinforcing cognitive and experiential techniques. The eighth session focuses on the detailed description and prioritization of coping behaviors. The ninth session covers potential behavioral changes and specific behavioral techniques. In the tenth session, the research questionnaires are once again distributed and completed, questions are addressed, and—following a discussion and synthesis of the entire series of sessions—the intervention is brought to a close. This treatment program, based on the schema therapy approach developed by Young et al. (2012; translated by Hamidpour & Andouz, 2019), was administered to the experimental group over the course of ten 45-minute sessions.
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
Fanouse Rah Counseling and Psychological Clinic
Full name of responsible person
Fatemeh Lorzanganeh
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Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor

Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University
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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
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Fatemeh Lorzanganeh
Position
Master's Student
Latest degree
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Psychology
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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