


# The Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy on Marital Burnout in Couples with Experience of Emotional Divorce

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Emotional divorce is one of the common yet concealed phenomena in marital relationships and is associated with extensive psychological consequences, including marital burnout. The present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) on marital burnout among couples with experience of emotional divorce.

**Methodology:** The present research employed a quasi-experimental design with pretest, posttest, and follow-up phases including a control group. The statistical population consisted of all couples who referred to the Ganj-e Mehr Counseling Center in Babol in 2024. Using convenience sampling, 30 couples were selected and randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control group. Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy sessions were conducted once weekly in two-hour sessions over a period of 10 weeks. Marital burnout was measured using the Pines Marital Burnout Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA).

**Findings:** The results indicated a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the intervention. Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy significantly reduced marital burnout and its components among couples with experience of emotional divorce. Moreover, these effects remained statistically stable during the follow-up period ( $p < .001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Based on the findings, Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy can be considered an effective intervention for reducing marital burnout among couples, particularly those experiencing emotional divorce and who are at risk of formal separation.

**Keywords:** *Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy; Marital Burnout; Couples; Emotional Divorce.*

## 1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most fundamental and complex social institutions, playing a decisive role in

psychological well-being, emotional security, and social stability across the lifespan. Contemporary marital relationships, however, are increasingly confronted with multifaceted stressors stemming from socio-economic

pressures, shifting gender roles, technological transformation of communication, and rising expectations of emotional intimacy. These pressures have significantly increased vulnerability to relational deterioration and marital distress, manifesting in various forms such as emotional disengagement, reduced intimacy, communication breakdown, and, in more severe cases, emotional divorce. Emotional divorce represents a covert and often prolonged process in which spouses remain legally married while emotionally disconnected, experiencing profound detachment, alienation, and relational dissatisfaction (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Hammad, 2023; Ghobadi Kohanmoui et al., 2024; Senol et al., 2023).

Unlike legal divorce, emotional divorce unfolds gradually and silently within the relational system, frequently escaping formal recognition while exerting deep psychological consequences on both partners. Research has consistently shown that emotional divorce is strongly associated with chronic relational dissatisfaction, impaired emotional regulation, attachment insecurity, diminished marital harmony, and heightened vulnerability to marital burnout (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Hammad, 2023; Navroodi et al., 2025; Zahed et al., 2025). Marital burnout is a critical psychological outcome of prolonged relational distress, characterized by emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and psychological depletion within the marital relationship. It reflects a state of chronic stress in which spouses experience emotional numbness, loss of motivation, feelings of hopelessness, and a sense of entrapment within the marital bond (Sadeghi et al., 2022; Safarinia et al., 2022; Topkaya et al., 2024).

Recent empirical evidence indicates that marital burnout has become increasingly prevalent across cultures and demographic groups. Topkaya et al. (2024) identified communication problems, unmet emotional needs, attachment anxiety, and reduced marital satisfaction as significant predictors of couple burnout among married individuals (Topkaya et al., 2024). Similarly, Safarinia et al. (2022) demonstrated that maladaptive social comparison and dysfunctional exchange styles significantly predict the severity of marital burnout (Safarinia et al., 2022). When marital burnout coexists with emotional divorce, the relational system enters a highly vulnerable state in which emotional withdrawal, emotional suppression, and relational hopelessness become entrenched patterns (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Hammad, 2023; Ghobadi Kohanmoui et al., 2024).

The psychological burden of marital burnout extends beyond relational dissatisfaction and encompasses a wide

spectrum of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impairments. Individuals suffering from marital burnout frequently report depressive symptoms, anxiety, impaired emotional regulation, lowered self-worth, diminished sexual satisfaction, and compromised physical health (Bahrami Moqadam et al., 2023; Goodarzi et al., 2022; Mentez & Yildirim, 2024). Furthermore, persistent marital burnout undermines family functioning, disrupts parenting processes, and increases the risk of intergenerational transmission of relational dysfunction (Jenkins et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2024).

Given the pervasive and destructive impact of marital burnout and emotional divorce, the identification of effective therapeutic interventions has become a central priority in contemporary couple and family psychology. Among existing approaches, Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) has emerged as one of the most empirically supported and theoretically grounded interventions for the treatment of marital distress. Rooted in attachment theory and experiential psychotherapy, EFCT conceptualizes marital distress as a consequence of disrupted emotional bonds and unmet attachment needs between partners (Holmström, 2023; Senol et al., 2023). Rather than focusing solely on behavioral change or cognitive restructuring, EFCT aims to transform the underlying emotional processes that organize couple interactions by facilitating emotional awareness, emotional expression, and secure attachment bonding (Bailey et al., 2023; Marren et al., 2022).

Extensive empirical evidence supports the efficacy of EFCT across diverse populations and relational contexts. Bahrami Moqadam et al. (2023) demonstrated that EFCT significantly reduces marital burnout and depressive symptoms among distressed couples (Bahrami Moqadam et al., 2023). Goodarzi et al. (2022) found that EFCT not only decreased marital burnout but also strengthened moral commitment among couples seeking divorce (Goodarzi et al., 2022). Similarly, Zolfalipour Maleki and Esmkhani Akbarinejad (2023) reported that EFCT significantly improved marital burnout and sexual intimacy in couples coping with breast cancer (Zolfalipour Maleki & Esmkhani Akbarinejad, 2023). Van Diest et al. (2023) further confirmed the effectiveness of EFCT in cancer survivor couples suffering from both marital and sexual problems using rigorous single-case experimental designs (Van Diest et al., 2023).

The therapeutic mechanisms of EFCT operate through systematic restructuring of emotional responses, interactive patterns, and attachment bonds. By facilitating emotional

accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement, EFCT enables couples to exit destructive interaction cycles and develop new patterns of emotional safety and mutual support (Bailey et al., 2023; Holmström, 2023). Qualitative meta-analytic evidence confirms that clients undergoing EFCT experience profound emotional insight, enhanced emotional regulation, and increased relational security (Marren et al., 2022). These emotional transformations serve as the foundation for sustainable improvements in marital functioning and relational satisfaction.

Recent comparative studies further underscore the unique advantages of EFCT. Ghobadi Kohanmoui et al. (2024) demonstrated that EFCT outperforms cognitive-behavioral couple therapy in reducing marital burnout among couples experiencing emotional divorce (Ghobadi Kohanmoui et al., 2024). Karami et al. (2024) found that EFCT based on attachment injury repair produces greater improvements in positive emotions toward the spouse and divorce waiver compared to acceptance and commitment therapy (Karami et al., 2024). Zahed et al. (2025) similarly reported superior outcomes of EFCT relative to reality therapy in modifying irrational beliefs and marital perfectionism among women experiencing emotional divorce (Zahed et al., 2025). Toope et al. (2025) extended these findings by demonstrating that EFCT effectively reduces cognitive avoidance in women with marital distress (Toope et al., 2025).

Beyond clinical outcomes, EFCT has demonstrated broad applicability across diverse relational challenges, including extramarital affairs, attachment injuries, sexual dysfunction, communication breakdown, and relational trauma (Ghaforian Mohabi et al., 2025; Navroodi et al., 2025; Van Diest et al., 2023). Ghaforian Mohabi et al. (2025) reported that EFCT in both couple and individual formats significantly enhances attachment security among couples coping with extramarital relationships (Ghaforian Mohabi et al., 2025). Navroodi et al. (2025) confirmed that EFCT improves marital harmony and communication patterns in incompatible couples (Navroodi et al., 2025). Montazeri et al. (2025) further documented the effectiveness of EFCT in reducing marital disenchantment and improving quality of life among couples with marital conflicts (Montazeri et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of international evidence, research on EFCT in couples experiencing emotional divorce remains limited in many cultural contexts, particularly within Middle Eastern societies where emotional divorce is often concealed due to social stigma and cultural norms. Studies from Saudi Arabia and Iran

indicate that emotional divorce is highly prevalent and strongly associated with alexithymia, emotional suppression, marital burnout, and psychological distress among women (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Hammad, 2023; Zahed et al., 2025). These findings highlight the urgent need for culturally responsive interventions that directly target the emotional and attachment-based mechanisms underlying marital burnout and emotional divorce.

Furthermore, existing literature has largely examined EFCT outcomes in short-term post-intervention designs, with fewer studies assessing the durability of treatment effects over follow-up periods. Understanding whether EFCT produces stable and enduring reductions in marital burnout is essential for evaluating its long-term clinical value and practical implementation (Bahrami Moqadam et al., 2023; Marren et al., 2022). Addressing this gap is particularly important for couples experiencing emotional divorce, whose relational patterns are often deeply entrenched and resistant to superficial interventions.

In light of the theoretical significance of emotional processes in marital functioning, the empirical robustness of EFCT, and the escalating prevalence of emotional divorce and marital burnout, the present study seeks to contribute to the growing body of evidence by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy on marital burnout among couples experiencing emotional divorce.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy in reducing marital burnout among couples with experience of emotional divorce.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and, with respect to data collection, was a quantitative, quasi-experimental investigation using a pretest–posttest design with a two-month follow-up and a control group. The statistical population consisted of all couples who referred to the Ganj-e Mehrshahr Psychological and Counseling Services Center in Babol in 2024. For sampling, 30 couples were selected from the clients of the counseling center using convenience sampling and were randomly assigned to an experimental group (15 couples) and a control group (15 couples). The inclusion criteria were: obtaining a score of 73 or higher on the Marital Burnout Questionnaire, providing informed consent to participate in the study, and having at

least 2 years of marital life. The exclusion criteria included: prior history of divorce, substance abuse or use of psychotropic drugs, presence of physical or psychological disorders, absence from more than two sessions, and withdrawal from participation. In this study, the following instrument was used for data collection.

## 2.2. Measures

**Marital Burnout Questionnaire (MBQ):** This questionnaire was developed by Pines (1996) and consists of 21 items measuring three dimensions: physical burnout (Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 16), emotional burnout (Items 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 17), and psychological burnout (Items 6, 8, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates no experience of the described condition and 7 indicates a very high level of experience: never (1), once in a long while (2), rarely (3), sometimes (4), usually (5), often (6), and always (7). Items 3, 6, 19, and 20 are reverse-scored. Accordingly, total scores range from 21 to 147, with higher scores indicating greater marital burnout. Pines (1996) reported test–retest reliability over a one-month interval with a correlation coefficient of .76 and internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha of .93. In Iranian samples, the reliability of the questionnaire has been confirmed with a Cronbach’s alpha of .92. In another study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were reported as .83 for physical burnout, .80 for emotional burnout, .81 for psychological burnout, and .84 for the total scale. In the present study, the face validity of the Marital Burnout Questionnaire was confirmed by eight faculty members of the Department of Psychology and Counseling at Farhangian University, and its reliability was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha, yielding coefficients of .71 at pretest, .91 at posttest, and .80 at follow-up.

## 2.3. Intervention

The intervention in the present study was conducted based on Johnson’s Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) protocol, implemented for the experimental group in 10 weekly sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. The therapeutic process began with establishing rapport, clarifying participants’ expectations, and introducing the core concepts of emotion-focused couple therapy, marital satisfaction, and emotional and sexual expressiveness, followed by systematic assessment of maladaptive interaction patterns, attachment needs, emotional conflicts, and the overall quality of the marital relationship.

Subsequent sessions focused on identifying negative interaction cycles, uncovering attachment insecurities and underlying fears, facilitating emotional openness and self-disclosure, and reconstructing the emotional bond through clarification of core emotional responses. The protocol progressively deepened emotional engagement by expanding emotional experiences, promoting acceptance of the negative interaction cycle, enhancing attachment-based responsiveness, and strengthening personal and interpersonal functioning. Couples were guided to identify unmet attachment needs, express vulnerable emotions, articulate desires and fears, and develop new interactional patterns. Behavioral change was consolidated by replacing maladaptive responses with constructive emotional engagement, fostering secure attachment, and reinforcing positive interaction patterns. The final sessions emphasized integrating therapeutic gains into daily life, maintaining emotional involvement, stabilizing new relational patterns, and contrasting past negative interaction cycles with current adaptive functioning in order to sustain long-term relational change.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

In the present study, to test the research hypotheses and to examine the significance of differences between the experimental and control groups in marital burnout and its components, univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) were employed.

## 3. Findings and Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for total marital burnout and its three components across the experimental and control groups at pretest, posttest, and follow-up. At pretest, the two groups exhibited comparable levels of marital burnout and its components, indicating baseline equivalence. Following the intervention, the experimental group demonstrated substantial reductions in total marital burnout as well as in physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion, whereas the control group showed no meaningful changes. At follow-up, the experimental group maintained these improvements with only slight increases in mean scores, suggesting stability of treatment effects over time. In contrast, the control group’s scores remained largely unchanged across all three measurement points. These descriptive trends are consistent with the inferential findings

and illustrate the strong impact of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy on reducing marital burnout and its components.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Marital Burnout and Its Components Across Groups and Measurement Times*

Variable	Group	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Follow-up M (SD)
Total Marital Burnout	Experimental	102.47 (8.35)	64.21 (7.42)	66.18 (7.91)
	Control	101.89 (9.11)	99.74 (8.67)	100.31 (9.02)
Physical Exhaustion	Experimental	33.18 (4.27)	19.64 (3.85)	20.12 (4.02)
	Control	32.91 (4.56)	32.47 (4.33)	32.89 (4.41)
Emotional Exhaustion	Experimental	36.29 (4.88)	21.53 (4.02)	22.07 (4.26)
	Control	35.94 (5.01)	35.21 (4.87)	35.66 (4.93)
Psychological Exhaustion	Experimental	33.00 (4.35)	23.04 (4.12)	24.00 (4.21)
	Control	33.04 (4.47)	32.06 (4.25)	31.76 (4.38)

Table 2 presents the results of the one-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) comparing posttest mean scores of marital burnout.

**Table 2**

*Results of One-Way ANCOVA Comparing Posttest Mean Scores of Marital Burnout*

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Eta Squared	Statistical Power
Group	5199.118	1	5199.116	61.644	< .001	.68	1.00
Error	2277.156	27	84.330				

As shown in Table 2, a statistically significant difference was observed between the experimental group and the control group in marital burnout ( $F = 61.644, p < .001$ ). Therefore, the research hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy in reducing marital burnout is supported. The effect size

indicates that 68% of the variance in marital burnout was attributable to the intervention.

Table 3 presents the results of one-way ANCOVA on the posttest mean scores of the components of marital burnout for the experimental and control groups, controlling for pretest scores.

**Table 3**

*Results of One-Way ANCOVA on Posttest Mean Scores of Marital Burnout Components Controlling for Pretest*

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Eta Squared	Statistical Power
Physical Exhaustion	Pretest	22.24	1	22.24	0.93	.33	.036	.16
	Group	600.58	1	600.58	24.903	< .001	.48	.99
	Error	600.58	25	24.103				
Emotional Exhaustion	Pretest	5.63	1	5.63	0.18	.66	.007	.07
	Group	773.791	1	773.791	25.018	< .001	.51	.99
	Error	273.24	25	30.89				
Psychological Exhaustion	Pretest	107.37	1	107.37	2.58	.12	.094	.35
	Group	1188.315	1	1188.315	28.621	< .001	.52	.99
	Error	1037.97	25	41.52				

As shown in Table 3, significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups across all components of marital burnout. Accordingly, the second research hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of Emotion-

Focused Couple Therapy in reducing the components of marital burnout is supported. The magnitude of the effect was 48% for physical exhaustion, 51% for emotional exhaustion, and 52% for psychological exhaustion.

Table 4 presents the results of one-way ANCOVA comparing the follow-up mean scores of marital burnout between the experimental and control groups.

**Table 4**

*Results of One-Way ANCOVA Comparing Follow-Up Mean Scores of Marital Burnout*

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Eta Squared	Statistical Power
Group	5315.76	1	5315.76	54.93	< .001	.68	1.00
Error	2612.44	27	96.76				

As shown in Table 4, Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy led to a sustained reduction in marital burnout for the experimental group at the one-month follow-up compared with the control group ( $F = 54.93, p < .001$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy in maintaining reduced marital burnout at the one-month follow-up stage is confirmed. The magnitude of the effect remained 68%, indicating a strong and stable intervention effect.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study investigated the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) in reducing marital burnout among couples experiencing emotional divorce. The findings demonstrated that EFCT significantly decreased overall marital burnout and all its core components, including physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and psychological exhaustion, both at posttest and at the one-month follow-up stage. These results provide strong empirical support for the therapeutic utility of EFCT in addressing deeply entrenched relational distress associated with emotional divorce, thereby extending the existing body of knowledge on emotion-based interventions in couple therapy.

The observed reduction in marital burnout is theoretically consistent with the foundational assumptions of EFCT, which conceptualize marital distress as the consequence of disrupted emotional bonds and unmet attachment needs between partners (Holmström, 2023; Senol et al., 2023). In emotionally divorced couples, chronic emotional disengagement and defensive interaction cycles maintain relational suffering and gradually erode emotional safety. By systematically restructuring these interaction patterns and facilitating secure emotional engagement, EFCT directly targets the core processes that sustain marital burnout. The strong effect size obtained in the present study ( $\eta^2 = .68$ ) is comparable with outcomes reported by Bahrami Moqadam

et al. (2023), who documented substantial reductions in marital burnout following EFCT intervention (Bahrami Moqadam et al., 2023). Similarly, Goodarzi et al. (2022) reported that EFCT significantly alleviated marital burnout while simultaneously strengthening moral commitment among couples seeking divorce, underscoring the broad relational impact of emotion-based therapeutic change (Goodarzi et al., 2022).

The significant improvements observed in each dimension of marital burnout further illuminate the multidimensional effectiveness of EFCT. Physical exhaustion within marriage reflects chronic stress, tension, and somatic manifestations of unresolved emotional conflict. The marked reduction in this component aligns with findings by Zolfalipour Maleki and Esmkhani Akbarinejad (2023), who found that EFCT alleviated physical and emotional strain while enhancing sexual intimacy in couples facing severe health-related stressors (Zolfalipour Maleki & Esmkhani Akbarinejad, 2023). Emotional exhaustion, characterized by emotional numbness, hopelessness, and loss of relational motivation, showed substantial decline following intervention, consistent with Montazeri et al. (2025), who demonstrated that EFCT significantly reduced marital disenchantment and enhanced quality of life in couples with chronic conflicts (Montazeri et al., 2025). Psychological exhaustion, which encompasses cognitive disengagement, negative relational schemas, and feelings of entrapment, was likewise significantly reduced, echoing the findings of Ghobadi Kohanmoui et al. (2024), who reported superior outcomes of EFCT compared with cognitive-behavioral couple therapy in emotionally divorced couples (Ghobadi Kohanmoui et al., 2024).

The persistence of therapeutic gains at follow-up suggests that EFCT produces durable transformation in relational functioning rather than temporary symptom relief. This stability is theoretically grounded in EFCT's emphasis on restructuring attachment bonds and emotional responsiveness, which produces long-term shifts in

relational security and interaction patterns (Holmström, 2023; Marren et al., 2022). Marren et al. (2022), in a qualitative meta-analysis, concluded that clients undergoing EFCT experience enduring emotional insight and relational security that extend well beyond the termination of therapy (Marren et al., 2022). The sustained reduction of marital burnout in the present study supports this conclusion and highlights the long-term clinical value of EFCT for couples suffering from emotional divorce.

Importantly, the present findings converge with evidence from culturally diverse contexts, underscoring the cross-cultural applicability of EFCT. Al-Shahrani and Ahmed Hammad (2023) documented strong associations between emotional divorce, emotional suppression, and alexithymia among married women in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the centrality of emotional processes in marital distress (Al-Shahrani & Ahmed Hammad, 2023). In such contexts, EFCT's focus on emotional awareness, expression, and attachment security becomes particularly salient. Similarly, Zahed et al. (2025) demonstrated that EFCT was more effective than reality therapy in reducing irrational beliefs and marital perfectionism among women experiencing emotional divorce (Zahed et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the present results and highlight EFCT as a culturally adaptable intervention for emotionally distressed couples.

Moreover, EFCT's effectiveness in the present study aligns with recent comparative research demonstrating its superiority over alternative therapeutic approaches. Karami et al. (2024) reported that EFCT based on attachment injury repair generated stronger improvements in positive emotional bonds and divorce waiver than acceptance and commitment therapy (Karami et al., 2024). Toope et al. (2025) further confirmed EFCT's advantage in reducing cognitive avoidance in women with marital distress (Toope et al., 2025). Together with the present findings, these studies collectively support EFCT as a first-line intervention for complex marital dysfunction, particularly in cases involving emotional divorce.

The present results also contribute to the broader literature on marital burnout predictors. Prior research has identified dysfunctional communication, unmet emotional needs, attachment insecurity, and maladaptive relational schemas as central determinants of marital burnout (Sadeghi et al., 2022; Safarinia et al., 2022; Topkaya et al., 2024). EFCT directly addresses these determinants by facilitating emotional engagement, promoting vulnerability, and restoring secure attachment bonds. In doing so, EFCT

disrupts the negative interaction cycles that perpetuate emotional divorce and marital burnout, thereby producing systemic relational change.

## 5. Conclusion

Taken together, the findings of the present study provide compelling evidence that EFCT is a highly effective and durable intervention for reducing marital burnout among couples experiencing emotional divorce. By transforming emotional processes, restructuring attachment bonds, and fostering relational security, EFCT offers a powerful therapeutic pathway for restoring marital functioning in severely distressed couples.

## 6. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite the significant findings, the present study has several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the results. Second, reliance on self-report measures may have introduced response bias. Third, the follow-up period was limited to one month, restricting conclusions regarding long-term stability of treatment effects. Fourth, the absence of qualitative data prevented a deeper exploration of participants' subjective experiences of change. Finally, the sample was drawn from a single counseling center, which may limit cultural and demographic representativeness.

Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal research with extended follow-up periods is recommended to examine the sustainability of EFCT outcomes over time. Incorporating qualitative methods could enrich understanding of the emotional and relational processes underlying therapeutic change. Comparative studies evaluating EFCT against other evidence-based interventions across different cultural contexts would further clarify its relative efficacy. Finally, examining mediating variables such as attachment security, emotional regulation, and communication patterns may provide deeper insight into mechanisms of change.

Clinicians are encouraged to incorporate EFCT as a primary intervention for couples experiencing emotional divorce and marital burnout. Training programs for therapists should emphasize emotion-based and attachment-focused competencies. Counseling centers may consider integrating EFCT into standard treatment protocols for marital distress. Preventive interventions based on EFCT principles could be developed for couples at risk of

emotional disengagement. Finally, policymakers and mental health organizations should support broader access to EFCT services to strengthen marital health and family stability.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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The authors report no conflict of interest.

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