

## The Effectiveness of Group-Based Solution-Focused Therapy on Communication Skills and Marital Adjustment


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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph discussing communication skills (“Communication skills are among the most central psychological and relational determinants...”), the authors define several communication dimensions but do not operationally distinguish them from marital adjustment constructs. Because constructs such as affectional expression, cohesion, and assertiveness conceptually overlap, there is a risk of construct redundancy. The manuscript should provide a clearer conceptual differentiation between predictor-related communication outcomes and broader dyadic adjustment outcomes to avoid criterion contamination in interpretation.

The review of empirical literature contains extensive citation accumulation; however, several studies are presented sequentially without critical synthesis. For example, the paragraph beginning “Empirical studies have consistently linked communication patterns and conflict processes with marital conflict...” summarizes prior findings but does not explain methodological limitations, inconsistencies, or effect magnitude across studies. A stronger integrative synthesis comparing intervention formats, sample characteristics, and outcomes would substantially improve the scholarly rigor of the literature review.

The psychometric discussion of the Queendom Communication Skills Questionnaire requires further justification. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.69 for the total scale is marginal and may not adequately support robust inferential interpretation. Moreover, reliability estimates from different populations (high school students and university students) are presented without clarifying whether psychometric properties were recalculated for the present sample. The authors should report internal consistency coefficients obtained from their own participants.

The section describing the Dyadic Adjustment Scale provides historical reliability data but does not discuss cultural adaptation procedures in sufficient depth. Since marital norms and emotional expression may vary substantially across sociocultural contexts, the manuscript should include information regarding the Persian translation process, factorial validity in Iranian samples, and any previous validation studies specifically involving student couples.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

### 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The justification for selecting married university students as the target population remains underdeveloped. Although the manuscript mentions "academic, economic, developmental, and family pressures," the authors do not provide empirical evidence demonstrating why married students represent a uniquely vulnerable or clinically relevant population compared with community couples. Including prevalence statistics or prior findings on marital distress among student couples would strengthen the rationale for the study population.

The study design section states that 50 individuals were initially selected and only 30 voluntarily agreed to participate. This raises an important concern regarding self-selection bias. Individuals motivated to participate in couple-related interventions may already possess greater readiness for change, higher relational motivation, or stronger psychological insight than nonparticipants. The authors should explicitly discuss how volunteer bias may have influenced internal validity and treatment responsiveness.

The randomization procedure is insufficiently described. The sentence "participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group" does not explain the allocation method, concealment procedure, or whether baseline equivalence was statistically verified prior to intervention. Given the quasi-experimental design, detailed reporting of assignment procedures is necessary to evaluate selection threats and group comparability.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are overly general and clinically ambiguous. The exclusion criterion "presence of a specific physical or psychological illness" lacks diagnostic specificity and does not clarify whether screening was conducted through clinical interviews, self-report, or medical documentation. The manuscript should specify the assessment procedures used to determine participant eligibility and clarify whether psychiatric comorbidity was systematically assessed.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.