

The Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on Resilience and Marital Adjustment among Couples with Marital Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to determine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on resilience and marital adjustment among couples experiencing marital conflicts.

Methods and Materials: The present study employed a quasi-experimental method with a pretest–posttest design and a control group. The statistical population consisted of couples with marital conflicts who referred to counseling centers in Tehran during 2025. Using convenience sampling, 28 participants were selected and randomly assigned into two groups, including an experimental group (n = 14) and a control group (n = 14). Data collection instruments included the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale and the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The experimental group participated in eight 2-hour sessions of cognitive behavioral therapy, while the control group received no intervention. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and analysis of covariance in SPSS software.

Findings: The findings indicated that cognitive behavioral therapy had a significant effect on both resilience and marital adjustment among couples with marital conflicts. The results of covariance analysis demonstrated that the effects of time, group, and the interaction between time and group were statistically significant for resilience and marital adjustment at the $p < .001$ level. Participants in the experimental group showed significantly higher posttest scores in resilience and marital adjustment compared to the control group, indicating the effectiveness of the intervention in improving psychological resilience and relational functioning.

Conclusion: The results of the present study demonstrated that cognitive behavioral therapy is an effective intervention for improving resilience and marital adjustment among couples experiencing marital conflicts. By modifying maladaptive cognitions, enhancing emotional regulation, and improving communication and coping skills, cognitive behavioral therapy can strengthen couples' psychological adaptability and relational quality. Therefore, CBT-based interventions may be beneficial in counseling and therapeutic settings for reducing marital distress and promoting healthier interpersonal relationships among couples.

Keywords: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Resilience, Marital Adjustment, Couples, Marital Conflicts.

1. Introduction

Marital relationships are considered one of the most fundamental social and emotional structures in human life, and the quality of these relationships plays a central role in psychological well-being, emotional stability, and family functioning. Marital adjustment refers to the degree of agreement, satisfaction, cohesion, and emotional compatibility between spouses and is regarded as a major indicator of family health and relational stability (Bakhshi & Sadeghi, 2023; Etemadi, 2024). When couples experience persistent disagreements, ineffective communication patterns, and unresolved emotional tensions, marital conflicts emerge and gradually undermine the quality of the relationship. Marital conflict is among the most prevalent relational problems affecting couples worldwide and has been associated with reduced marital satisfaction, emotional distress, impaired interpersonal functioning, and increased risk of separation and divorce (Lopez-Ixta et al., 2025; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Research has consistently demonstrated that chronic marital conflict negatively affects psychological functioning not only in couples themselves but also in the broader family system, including parenting quality, emotional climate, and children's psychological adjustment (Driver et al., 2017; Mutlu et al., 2018).

The increasing prevalence of marital conflicts in contemporary societies has transformed relational distress into a major mental health concern. Couples exposed to chronic interpersonal disagreements often experience emotional exhaustion, psychological vulnerability, diminished intimacy, and reduced emotional security within the relationship (Mahrooz Parvizi et al., 2025; M. Parvizi et al., 2025). Studies have shown that maladaptive interaction patterns, irrational beliefs, cognitive distortions, and poor emotional regulation contribute significantly to the development and persistence of marital conflict (Etemadi, 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2025). In addition, emotional disconnection and ineffective communication styles may intensify negative interpersonal cycles and increase the likelihood of emotional withdrawal and dissatisfaction among spouses (Beyrami et al., 2024; Vaslehchi et al., 2024). Consequently, identifying effective psychological interventions that can improve couples' emotional functioning and relational adjustment has become an important priority in the field of family psychology.

Among the psychological variables associated with successful adaptation to marital stress, resilience has received considerable attention in recent years. Resilience

refers to an individual's ability to adapt positively and recover effectively in the face of adversity, stress, or psychological pressure (Seiler & Jenewein, 2019; Valizadeh et al., 2023). Individuals with higher resilience are generally more capable of regulating emotions, maintaining psychological stability, and coping adaptively with stressful life events. Within marital relationships, resilience enables couples to manage interpersonal tensions more effectively, preserve emotional closeness during stressful experiences, and sustain relationship quality despite relational challenges (Bhandare & Simon, 2024; Haqaeq, 2020). In contrast, low resilience has been associated with emotional dysregulation, ineffective coping strategies, heightened interpersonal sensitivity, and greater vulnerability to marital dissatisfaction and relational instability (Ebrahimi Moghaddam & Poori Mohammad, 2015; Faryabi et al., 2021). Therefore, resilience can be regarded as a protective psychological resource that strengthens couples' ability to navigate marital difficulties successfully.

Research findings have repeatedly emphasized the close association between resilience and marital functioning. For example, Bhandare and Simon reported that resilience and social support significantly contribute to marital well-being and marital satisfaction in middle adulthood (Bhandare & Simon, 2024). Similarly, studies on couples affected by infidelity and emotional betrayal have demonstrated that interventions focused on emotional regulation and self-compassion can improve resilience and relational functioning simultaneously (Aghili et al., 2023; Haghghi Shokoohi et al., 2024). Furthermore, investigations conducted among vulnerable populations have shown that resilience enhancement contributes to improved emotional adjustment, interpersonal communication, and quality of life (Guo et al., 2023; Valizadeh et al., 2023). These findings suggest that resilience not only influences individual psychological functioning but also plays a substantial role in relational adaptation and marital stability.

Marital adjustment is another key construct closely associated with the quality and durability of intimate relationships. Marital adjustment encompasses emotional intimacy, mutual understanding, agreement on important life issues, and constructive communication patterns between spouses (Bakhshi & Sadeghi, 2023; Mutlu et al., 2018). Couples with high marital adjustment typically experience greater emotional support, more effective conflict resolution, and higher levels of relational satisfaction. Conversely, low marital adjustment is associated with frequent conflicts, emotional distancing, dissatisfaction, and

increased psychological distress (Driver et al., 2017; Tasev & Getahun, 2021). Previous studies have also shown that marital maladjustment is linked to depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced psychological well-being among spouses (Etemadi, 2024; Santerre-Baillargeon et al., 2018). Therefore, improving marital adjustment is considered one of the primary goals of therapeutic interventions designed for distressed couples.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has emerged as one of the most effective and empirically supported psychological approaches for addressing interpersonal and emotional difficulties. CBT is based on the assumption that maladaptive cognitions, irrational beliefs, and dysfunctional behavioral patterns contribute to emotional distress and relational problems (Hall et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2025). Within marital relationships, negative automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, and unrealistic expectations often intensify conflicts and impair communication between spouses. Cognitive behavioral interventions attempt to identify these maladaptive thought patterns and replace them with more rational and adaptive cognitions while simultaneously promoting constructive behavioral skills and emotional regulation strategies (Mahrooz Parvizi et al., 2025; Vaslehchi et al., 2024). Through techniques such as cognitive restructuring, communication training, problem-solving, emotional awareness, and behavioral rehearsal, CBT can improve interpersonal functioning and strengthen emotional intimacy among couples.

Several empirical investigations have supported the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral interventions in improving marital functioning. Abbasi and Abbasi found that group couple therapy based on CBT significantly enhanced marital satisfaction and marital adjustment among couples experiencing relational distress (Abbasi & Abbasi, 2025). Similarly, Beyrami et al. demonstrated that cognitive-behavioral couple therapy improved marital satisfaction and intimacy in maladjusted couples and produced meaningful improvements in relational functioning (Beyrami et al., 2024). Vaslehchi et al. also reported that cognitive-behavioral couple therapy effectively reduced marital burnout and modified dysfunctional communication beliefs among couples on the verge of divorce (Vaslehchi et al., 2024). Moreover, studies focusing on women with marital conflicts have shown that CBT interventions can reduce marital boredom, emotional exhaustion, and interpersonal dissatisfaction (Mahrooz Parvizi et al., 2025; M. Parvizi et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings indicate that CBT can play an important role in improving emotional adjustment

and reducing relational distress in couples experiencing marital problems.

In addition to improving marital adjustment, cognitive behavioral interventions may also contribute to resilience enhancement. CBT emphasizes adaptive coping, emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving skills, all of which are closely related to resilience processes (Hall et al., 2019; Seiler & Jenewein, 2019). By helping individuals reinterpret stressful experiences and challenge maladaptive cognitive schemas, CBT facilitates psychological adaptability and emotional stability. Previous research has shown that interventions based on cognitive and compassion-focused approaches improve resilience across diverse populations (Guo et al., 2023; Valizadeh et al., 2023). Haqaeq reported that acceptance and commitment therapy significantly improved resilience and marital satisfaction among infertile women (Haqaeq, 2020), while Salari Feyzabad et al. demonstrated that integrative couple therapy increased resilience in couples affected by infidelity (Salari Feyzabad et al., 2020). Furthermore, compassion-based and self-compassion interventions have been linked with enhanced resilience, emotional regulation, and interpersonal functioning (Kuchar et al., 2023; Santerre-Baillargeon et al., 2018). Since CBT shares several mechanisms with these interventions, including cognitive flexibility and adaptive coping, it can reasonably be expected to strengthen resilience among couples facing marital conflicts.

Another important aspect of marital conflict involves the role of emotional vulnerability and maladaptive interpersonal processes. Couples experiencing chronic conflict often exhibit heightened emotional reactivity, irrational beliefs, emotional suppression, and ineffective coping behaviors (Etemadi, 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2025). Emotional dysregulation may intensify misunderstandings and contribute to escalating cycles of criticism, defensiveness, and withdrawal. Previous studies have indicated that therapeutic interventions emphasizing emotional awareness, cognitive restructuring, and compassion can reduce psychological distress and improve interpersonal functioning among distressed couples (Aghili et al., 2023; Haghghi Shokoochi et al., 2024). Likewise, Momeni Javid et al. demonstrated that group counseling interventions significantly improved marital relationships among betrayed women (Momeni Javid et al., 2015). Fadaei-Moghadam et al. also found that cognitive couple therapy improved relationship functioning and reduced impulsivity among couples with marital conflict (Fadaei-Moghadam et

al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of structured psychological interventions in modifying maladaptive relational patterns and promoting healthier interpersonal interactions.

Although previous studies have examined the effects of various therapeutic approaches on marital functioning, relatively limited research has simultaneously investigated the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on both resilience and marital adjustment among couples experiencing marital conflicts. Many prior studies have focused primarily on marital satisfaction, intimacy, or emotional functioning separately, while fewer studies have explored resilience as a central psychological outcome within the context of couple therapy (Beyrami et al., 2024; M. Parvizi et al., 2025). Furthermore, cultural and contextual factors may influence the manifestation of marital conflicts and the effectiveness of psychological interventions, highlighting the need for additional research within different sociocultural settings (Lopez-Ixta et al., 2025; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Considering the growing prevalence of marital conflicts and their detrimental psychological consequences, investigating interventions capable of improving both resilience and marital adjustment appears highly necessary.

Given the theoretical foundations of cognitive behavioral therapy and the empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness in improving emotional and relational functioning, this study sought to examine whether CBT could enhance resilience and marital adjustment among couples experiencing marital conflicts. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on resilience and marital adjustment among couples with marital conflicts.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study employed a quasi-experimental method using a pretest–posttest design with a control group. The statistical population of the study consisted of couples experiencing marital conflicts who referred to counseling centers in Tehran during 2025. Participants were selected through convenience sampling based on their willingness to participate in the study and their fulfillment of the inclusion criteria. A total of 28 individuals were recruited and randomly assigned into two groups, including an experimental group ($n = 14$) and a control group ($n = 14$). The inclusion criteria included experiencing marital

conflicts, willingness to participate in therapeutic sessions, and the absence of severe psychiatric disorders that could interfere with participation in the intervention process. The exclusion criteria included absence from more than two therapy sessions and unwillingness to continue participation in the study. Prior to the implementation of the intervention, both groups completed the pretest measures. Subsequently, the experimental group received cognitive behavioral therapy intervention across eight 2-hour sessions, while the control group did not receive any psychological intervention during the study period. At the end of the intervention, posttest assessments were administered to both groups under similar conditions.

2.2. Measures

The Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was used to assess resilience among the participants. This scale was developed by Kathryn M. Connor and Jonathan R. T. Davidson in 2003 to measure individuals' ability to cope with stress and threatening situations. The questionnaire consists of 25 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (completely false) to 4 (always true). Although the instrument assesses multiple dimensions of resilience, it yields a total resilience score. Exploratory factor analysis conducted by the developers identified five dimensions, including personal competence and tenacity, trust in personal instincts and tolerance of negative affect, positive acceptance of change and secure relationships, control, and spirituality. Previous studies have confirmed the validity and reliability of the scale through factor analysis, convergent validity, divergent validity, test–retest reliability, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients across both normal and at-risk populations. Connor and Davidson (2003) reported satisfactory psychometric properties for the instrument. In Iranian studies, Samani et al. (2007) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, while Mohammadi (2005) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.89 and construct validity coefficients ranging from 0.41 to 0.64. Kordmirza (2009) also reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90. Furthermore, recent research conducted by Velickovic et al. (2020) confirmed the construct validity of the five-factor structure of the CD-RISC in a non-clinical Swedish population using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), developed by Graham B. Spanier in 1976, was used to assess marital adjustment among couples. This instrument was designed to

evaluate the quality of adjustment between married partners or individuals living together. The scale consists of 32 items and measures four dimensions, including dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. The questionnaire items are scored using a Likert-type scale, and some items are reverse scored to enhance measurement accuracy. Total scores range from 0 to 151, with higher scores indicating better marital adjustment and lower scores reflecting poorer adjustment. According to Spanier (1976), individuals scoring 101 or lower are considered maladjusted, whereas scores above 101 indicate satisfactory adjustment. The mean score for well-adjusted couples in Spanier's original study was reported as 114.7, whereas maladjusted couples obtained a mean score of 70.7. The construct validity of the scale has been supported through factor analytic studies and correlations with other measures of marital satisfaction and relationship quality. Busby et al. (1995) confirmed the factor structure of the DAS in American samples and reported significant correlations with other indicators of relationship quality. In Iranian populations, studies conducted by Sanaei (2000) and Rasouli (2009) demonstrated satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity for the Persian version of the scale and confirmed its ability to distinguish between adjusted and maladjusted couples. The total scale has demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients reported at 0.96 for the total score. Internal consistency coefficients for the subscales ranged from 0.73 to 0.94. Previous Iranian standardization studies also reported acceptable test-retest reliability and significant correlations with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, supporting the reliability and validity of the Persian version of the DAS.

2.3. Intervention

The experimental group participated in a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) intervention consisting of eight weekly sessions, each lasting approximately 2 hours. The intervention was conducted in a group format and focused on identifying and modifying dysfunctional cognitions, maladaptive beliefs, and ineffective behavioral patterns associated with marital conflicts. Throughout the sessions,

participants were trained in cognitive restructuring techniques, emotional regulation strategies, communication skills, problem-solving methods, anger management, and constructive coping mechanisms. Homework assignments and behavioral exercises were also provided to facilitate the generalization of therapeutic skills into daily marital interactions. The therapeutic process emphasized increasing awareness of automatic negative thoughts, improving interpersonal understanding, enhancing adaptive coping responses, and strengthening emotional intimacy between couples. In contrast, the control group did not receive any psychological or counseling intervention during the study period.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the participants' scores on resilience and marital adjustment measures. Inferential statistics were employed to examine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on the dependent variables. After verifying the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, covariance analysis was utilized to compare posttest scores between the experimental and control groups while controlling for pretest differences. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software, and the significance level for all statistical tests was considered to be $p < .05$.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic findings indicated that the participants in both the experimental and control groups were couples experiencing marital conflicts who had referred to counseling centers in Tehran during 2025. The total sample consisted of 28 participants who were equally assigned to the experimental and control groups, with 14 participants in each group. The participants were within the adult age range and had sufficient literacy to complete the questionnaires and participate in the therapeutic sessions. No significant differences were observed between the groups in terms of baseline demographic characteristics prior to the intervention.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Resilience and Marital Adjustment Scores in the Experimental and Control Groups

Variables and Groups	Pretest Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean	Posttest SD
Experimental Group – Resilience	40.47	4.21	53.57	5.73
Control Group – Resilience	41.65	4.53	43.69	4.14
Experimental Group – Marital Adjustment	61.83	6.68	72.53	7.45
Control Group – Marital Adjustment	62.45	6.12	60.38	6.87

As presented in Table 1, the mean scores of resilience and marital adjustment in the experimental group increased from the pretest to the posttest stages, whereas the control group showed only slight changes across the two measurement stages. Specifically, the resilience mean score in the experimental group increased from 40.47 in the pretest to 53.57 in the posttest, while the marital adjustment mean score increased from 61.83 to 72.53. These findings indicate that participants who received cognitive behavioral therapy demonstrated higher levels of resilience and marital adjustment following the intervention compared to the control group.

Before conducting the main inferential analyses, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were examined. The skewness and kurtosis values for resilience and marital adjustment in both the pretest and posttest stages were within the acceptable range of ± 2 , indicating that the variables had a normal distribution. In addition, the results of Levene’s test for equality of variances were non-significant for all study variables ($p > .05$), confirming the assumption of homogeneity of variances. Therefore, the assumptions required for conducting parametric analyses and multivariate covariance analysis were met.

Table 2

Results of Analysis of Covariance for Resilience and Marital Adjustment

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Resilience	Time Effect	786.37	1.45	542.32	67.78	$p < .001$
	Group Effect	1354.53	1	1354.53	123.35	$p < .001$
	Time \times Group Effect	1073.12	1.65	650.37	98.12	$p < .001$
Marital Adjustment	Time Effect	386.37	1.72	224.63	29.36	$p < .001$
	Group Effect	631.45	1	631.45	91.18	$p < .001$
	Time \times Group Effect	386.12	1.63	236.88	36.96	$p < .001$

The results presented in Table 2 demonstrated that the observed F values for the effects of time, group, and the interaction between time and group were statistically significant for both resilience and marital adjustment at the $p < .001$ level. The significant interaction effect between time and group indicates that cognitive behavioral therapy led to significant improvements in resilience and marital adjustment among couples experiencing marital conflicts. Accordingly, the intervention was effective in enhancing participants’ psychological resilience and improving the quality of marital adjustment compared to the control group.

that cognitive behavioral therapy significantly improved resilience and marital adjustment in the experimental group compared to the control group. The observed differences between the pretest and posttest scores indicated that participation in cognitive behavioral therapy sessions led to meaningful improvements in the participants’ psychological and relational functioning. These findings suggest that cognitive behavioral therapy can be considered an effective intervention for reducing the negative consequences of marital conflicts and strengthening adaptive coping capacities among couples.

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on resilience and marital adjustment among couples experiencing marital conflicts. The findings demonstrated

One of the principal findings of the present study was the significant improvement in resilience among couples who received cognitive behavioral therapy. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the positive impact of cognitive and emotion-focused interventions on resilience and psychological adaptation

(Haqaeq, 2020; Valizadeh et al., 2023). Resilience refers to the capacity to withstand stressful conditions and adapt effectively to adverse emotional experiences. Couples experiencing chronic marital conflict are frequently exposed to persistent emotional tension, ineffective communication patterns, psychological exhaustion, and emotional instability, all of which may weaken their adaptive coping abilities and emotional endurance (Bhandare & Simon, 2024; Ebrahimi Moghaddam & Poori Mohammad, 2015). Cognitive behavioral therapy appears to strengthen resilience by helping individuals recognize maladaptive thoughts, challenge irrational beliefs, and replace dysfunctional cognitive patterns with more adaptive interpretations of interpersonal experiences.

The mechanisms through which cognitive behavioral therapy enhances resilience can be explained from several perspectives. First, CBT encourages individuals to identify negative automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions that intensify emotional distress during marital disagreements. Couples experiencing conflict often interpret interpersonal situations through rigid and catastrophic cognitive schemas, which increase emotional reactivity and reduce problem-solving capacity (Etemadi, 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2025). By restructuring maladaptive cognitions and promoting rational interpretations, cognitive behavioral therapy reduces emotional vulnerability and increases psychological flexibility. Greater cognitive flexibility allows individuals to respond to stressful marital situations with more adaptive coping strategies rather than emotional avoidance, impulsive reactions, or withdrawal behaviors.

Second, cognitive behavioral therapy teaches practical coping skills that directly contribute to resilience enhancement. Techniques such as emotional regulation, problem-solving training, communication skills development, and behavioral rehearsal enable couples to manage relational stress more effectively and maintain emotional stability during interpersonal conflicts. Similar findings have been reported in studies examining the role of psychological interventions in enhancing resilience across different populations (Guo et al., 2023; Kuchar et al., 2023). Guo et al. demonstrated that mindfulness-based group interventions improved resilience and self-compassion among vulnerable individuals, while Kuchar et al. found that self-compassion interventions strengthened psychological adaptability and resilience in athletes (Guo et al., 2023; Kuchar et al., 2023). Although these interventions differ theoretically from CBT, they share common processes related to emotional awareness, adaptive coping, and

cognitive flexibility, which may explain their similar outcomes.

The findings of the present study regarding resilience are also aligned with research emphasizing the protective role of resilience in marital functioning. Bhandare and Simon found that resilience contributes significantly to marital well-being and marital satisfaction in adulthood (Bhandare & Simon, 2024). Likewise, Seiler and Jenewein emphasized that resilience functions as a psychological resource that enables individuals to maintain emotional equilibrium during stressful experiences (Seiler & Jenewein, 2019). Couples with higher resilience are more likely to engage in constructive communication, emotional support, and adaptive conflict management, which subsequently strengthen relationship stability and satisfaction. Therefore, the increase in resilience observed in the present study may partially explain the simultaneous improvement in marital adjustment among the participants.

Another important finding of the study was the significant improvement in marital adjustment among couples receiving cognitive behavioral therapy. This finding is consistent with numerous previous studies that have identified CBT as an effective intervention for enhancing marital satisfaction, intimacy, communication quality, and emotional functioning among distressed couples (Abbasi & Abbasi, 2025; Beyrami et al., 2024). Marital adjustment reflects the degree of emotional harmony, agreement, mutual understanding, and relational satisfaction between spouses. Couples experiencing marital conflict often struggle with ineffective communication patterns, emotional distancing, mistrust, and unresolved interpersonal tensions, all of which reduce relational quality and emotional intimacy (Driver et al., 2017; Mutlu et al., 2018). The findings of the present study indicate that CBT can effectively modify these maladaptive interaction patterns and improve relational functioning.

One explanation for the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy on marital adjustment lies in its focus on cognitive restructuring and communication enhancement. Marital conflicts are frequently maintained by dysfunctional beliefs regarding intimacy, expectations, emotional expression, and partner behaviors (Etemadi, 2024; Vaslehchi et al., 2024). When spouses interpret their partner's actions through irrational or negative cognitive frameworks, emotional misunderstandings intensify and communication deteriorates. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps couples identify these distorted interpretations and replace them with more realistic and constructive perspectives. As couples develop greater awareness of their

cognitive patterns, they become more capable of engaging in empathic communication and constructive problem-solving. This process ultimately contributes to improved marital adjustment and relational satisfaction.

The findings of this study are particularly consistent with the results reported by Abbasi and Abbasi, who found that group couple therapy based on CBT significantly improved marital satisfaction and adjustment among couples (Abbasi & Abbasi, 2025). Similarly, Beyrami et al. demonstrated that cognitive-behavioral couple therapy increased marital intimacy and satisfaction among maladjusted couples (Beyrami et al., 2024). Vaslehchi et al. also reported that CBT reduced marital burnout and dysfunctional communication beliefs among couples on the verge of divorce (Vaslehchi et al., 2024). In addition, Parvizi et al. found that cognitive behavioral therapy significantly reduced marital boredom and emotional exhaustion among women experiencing marital conflict (Mahrooz Parvizi et al., 2025; M. Parvizi et al., 2025). These studies collectively support the conclusion that CBT is highly effective in improving emotional and relational functioning among distressed couples.

The present findings are also compatible with studies emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation and compassion in marital functioning. Research has shown that interventions focused on emotional awareness, forgiveness, compassion, and emotional acceptance improve relationship quality and interpersonal functioning among couples experiencing relational distress (Aghili et al., 2023; Haghghi Shokoohi et al., 2024). For example, Aghili et al. reported that compassion-based therapy enhanced marital intimacy and quality of life among women affected by marital infidelity (Aghili et al., 2023). Haghghi Shokoohi et al. similarly found that compassion-focused couple therapy improved forgiveness and marital quality of life in women affected by infidelity (Haghghi Shokoohi et al., 2024). Although CBT differs conceptually from compassion-focused approaches, both interventions promote emotional awareness, adaptive coping, and constructive interpersonal interactions, which may explain the consistency between their findings.

Furthermore, the results of the present study may be interpreted within the framework of interpersonal and family systems theories. Marital relationships function as dynamic emotional systems in which cognitive, behavioral, and emotional processes interact continuously. Dysfunctional communication cycles and maladaptive emotional responses may create reciprocal patterns of criticism, defensiveness,

hostility, and withdrawal that gradually weaken relationship quality (Driver et al., 2017). Cognitive behavioral therapy interrupts these maladaptive cycles by improving communication skills, emotional awareness, and cognitive regulation. As spouses learn more adaptive ways of interacting and interpreting relational experiences, emotional closeness and relational stability increase. The observed improvement in marital adjustment in the present study may therefore reflect broader changes in interpersonal functioning and emotional responsiveness between spouses.

The effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy observed in this study may also be related to the structured and skills-based nature of the intervention. CBT provides couples with concrete behavioral strategies for managing conflict, expressing emotions constructively, and resolving interpersonal disagreements. Couples often enter therapy lacking effective communication and problem-solving skills, which contributes to repeated cycles of misunderstanding and emotional frustration (Lopez-Ixta et al., 2025; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Through repeated practice and therapist guidance, participants gradually learn healthier communication patterns and develop greater confidence in managing relational stressors. This practical and structured orientation may explain why CBT consistently demonstrates positive outcomes in marital interventions.

Another notable aspect of the findings is the simultaneous improvement of both resilience and marital adjustment. These variables appear to influence each other reciprocally within marital relationships. Greater resilience enables couples to tolerate emotional distress more effectively, maintain emotional balance during disagreements, and approach relational challenges with greater flexibility and optimism. In turn, improved marital adjustment creates a more supportive emotional environment that strengthens psychological security and coping capacity (Bhandare & Simon, 2024; Santerre-Baillargeon et al., 2018). Therefore, the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy may stem from its ability to influence both individual psychological functioning and interpersonal relational processes simultaneously.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the present study also support the broader literature emphasizing the importance of psychological interventions in reducing the harmful consequences of marital conflict. Chronic marital conflict has been associated

with emotional distress, psychological maladjustment, anxiety, depression, reduced quality of life, and relational instability (Mutlu et al., 2018; Tasew & Getahun, 2021). Interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy can reduce these negative outcomes by strengthening adaptive coping mechanisms and improving relational functioning. Consequently, CBT may not only improve the marital relationship itself but also contribute to broader psychological well-being and family stability.

6. Limitations & Suggestions

One of the limitations of the present study was the relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of couples experiencing marital conflict. In addition, the use of convenience sampling may have reduced the representativeness of the sample. Another limitation was the reliance on self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by response biases and participants' subjective perceptions. Furthermore, the absence of a long-term follow-up phase prevented the evaluation of the durability and stability of the therapeutic effects over time. Cultural and contextual variables specific to the study population may also have influenced the outcomes and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Future research is recommended to examine the long-term effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy through follow-up assessments conducted several months after the completion of treatment. Researchers may also compare the effectiveness of CBT with other therapeutic approaches such as emotion-focused therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, or compassion-focused interventions in order to identify the most effective treatment strategies for couples experiencing marital conflict. Additionally, future studies should investigate the moderating role of variables such as attachment style, emotional regulation, personality traits, and duration of marriage in predicting treatment outcomes. Conducting studies with larger and more diverse samples across different cultural settings would also enhance the generalizability of findings.

The findings of the present study have important practical implications for counselors, psychologists, and family therapists working with couples experiencing marital conflict. Cognitive behavioral therapy can be incorporated into counseling and family intervention programs to strengthen resilience, improve communication skills, and enhance marital adjustment among distressed couples.

Mental health professionals may also design preventive educational workshops based on CBT principles to teach couples effective communication, emotional regulation, and conflict management skills before relational problems become severe. In addition, counseling centers and family support organizations can use CBT-based interventions as structured therapeutic programs to reduce marital dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and relational instability among couples seeking psychological support.

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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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Authors' Contributions

All authors have equally contributed 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.

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