Comparison of the Effectiveness of Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup with Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Focused on Trauma on Affective Capital and Depression in Adolescent Girls

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Article Info

Article type:
Original Research

How to cite this article:

Fatehi, M., Golparvar, M., & Mahdad, A. (2024). Comparison of the Effectiveness of Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup with Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Focused on Trauma on Affective Capital and Depression in Adolescent Girls. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling, 6*(3), 199-208.

http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.jarac.6.3.22

A B S T R A C T

Objective: Adolescent girls who experience emotional breakups have a pressing need to overcome their difficulties. Accordingly, this study aimed to compare the effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakup with cognitive-behavioral therapy on Affective capital and depression in adolescent girls.

Materials and Methods: This quasi-experimental study was conducted in three phases: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, with a control group. The statistical population consisted of adolescent girls who experienced emotional breakups in Isfahan in the winter of 2022, from which 48 girls were purposefully selected and assigned to three groups (each group with 16 participants). Golparvar's Affective capital Scale (2016) and Beck's Depression Inventory (1996) were used to measure the dependent variable in three stages. The two therapy groups each underwent ten 90-minute sessions, while the control group received no treatment. Data were analyzed using covariance analysis and Bonferroni post-hoc test through SPSS version 26.

Findings: The results showed a significant difference in Affective capital and depression between the Imago therapy for emotional breakup and cognitive-behavioral therapy groups compared to the control group (p < .01). There was no significant difference between the two therapies in Affective capital. However, in the follow-up stage, cognitive-behavioral therapy was more effective than Imago therapy for emotional breakup in reducing depression (p < .01).

Conclusion: Considering the effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakup and cognitive-behavioral therapy in enhancing Affective capital and reducing depression, it is recommended that these two therapies be used in psychological treatment centers for adolescent girls who have experienced emotional breakups.

Keywords: Imago therapy for emotional breakup, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Affective Capital, depression, adolescent girls.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period filled with both positive and negative ups and downs. Positive transformations during this period include the development of reproductive capacity and an increase in emotional, cognitive, and physical capacities (Honghao et al., 2021). Alongside these positive changes, adolescence can also involve intense emotional bonds and the potential for emotional breakups due to a lack of necessary knowledge and experience, which can lead to negative consequences (Connolly et al., 2023). Emotional breakup, by its nature, involves various negative emotional experiences such as loss of self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, anger, regret, and sometimes guilt and shame (Norouzi & Kajbaf, 2023). According to studies, a significant proportion of adolescents and young adults experience at least one romantic attachment during their adolescence, and more than half of them experience emotional breakups (Etemadnia et al., 2021). Among these, adolescent girls are more likely to experience psychological damage from emotional involvement and breakup compared to boys, thus often requiring more support and help (Ritter et al., 2023).

With the occurrence of emotional breakups, various states such as reduced feelings of vitality and energy, positive emotions, and happiness, as dimensions of affective capital, and symptoms of depression, including sadness, hopelessness, loss of motivation, suicidal thoughts, and tendencies, become prevalent and need attention. Affective capital refers to a state of vitality, energy, and experiencing joy and positive emotions such as a sense of competence and satisfaction, consisting of three dimensions: feeling energetic, positive emotion, and happiness (Nourian et al., 2021). The vitality, energy, and overall affective capital experienced in different situations, when used purposefully, can be transformed into various behavioral and functional skills (Abdoli et al., 2021). This variable is related to a wide range of factors including health resilience, a sense of dignity, empowerment, better quality of life, vitality (Golparvar & Zareiy, 2018), peak experiences, optimal life experiences (Ghasemi Kaleh Masihi et al., 2020), and less stress and burnout (Ghasemi Kaleh Masihi et al., 2020). Conversely, depression, which includes low mood, negative emotions, resentment, sadness, and changes in functional patterns, sleep, and eating, is the opposite of affective capital (Joosten et al., 2022). Depression often arises from failures in specific areas such as emotional relationship failures, loss,

or neurochemical changes in the central nervous system and brain (Till & Niederkrotenthaler, 2022).

With the onset of depression symptoms, individuals lose their previously significant motivations, and their performance in education, work, family, and relationships with friends, relatives, and colleagues is seriously impaired (Mirsu-Paun & Oliver, 2017). Furthermore, as depression symptoms worsen, individuals may experience feelings of worthlessness and the world, gradually leading to suicidal thoughts or tendencies (Shankman, 2022). The decline in affective capital and the occurrence of depression symptoms are sufficient to exacerbate the condition of an adolescent experiencing an emotional breakup. In such situations, therapeutic assistance becomes a priority for the adolescent facing an emotional breakup. Two therapies, Imago therapy, which focuses on re-evaluating and correcting perceptions in significant relationships, and trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy, which views phenomena like emotional breakups as trauma, are significantly suited to the needs of girls facing emotional breakups.

Imago therapy, introduced over five decades ago to address therapeutic needs for couples and resolve conflicts often leading to relationship breakdowns and separation, involves reconstructing the idealized image of love formed in childhood interactions with parents. This idealized image of love, despite possibly being far from reality, persists into adulthood and influences interpersonal relationships (Roddy et al., 2020). The mismatch between behavior and this idealized image can lead to conflict, blame, and ultimately relationship breakdown (Movahedi et al., 2019). Many individuals, without recognizing that their idealized image needs modification and treatment, move from one relationship to another, accumulating failures (Nezami et al., 2022). Imago therapy aims to reconstruct the persistent childhood image, improve relationships based on all possible individual capacities, convert complaints into logical requests, resolve inner anger and resentment, and revise relationships based on separation into satisfying, secure, and stable ones (Beheshtinezhad et al., 2019).

Imago therapy has been shown to be effective in various studies, such as Roddy et al.'s study on increasing relationship satisfaction (2020), Movahedi et al.'s study on marital satisfaction (2019), Sheydanfar et al.'s study on reducing burnout (2021), which is often accompanied by reduced emotional, behavioral, and mood performance (Movahedi et al., 2019; Roddy et al., 2020; Sheydanfar et al., 2021). However, fewer studies have specifically applied

Imago therapy to the needs of adolescents facing emotional breakups.

Alongside Imago therapy, trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy has significant potential for individuals who have experienced trauma in childhood or adolescence, and in its recent versions, in adulthood (Rajabi et al., 2018). This therapy, based on conventional cognitive-behavioral therapy, involves modifying dysfunctional thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes along with correcting negative behaviors and reactions over a course of typically 8 to 25 sessions (Mohajerin et al., 2023; Thielemann et al., 2022). This therapy has shown acceptable effectiveness for children and adolescents with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, stress, and depression (de Haan et al., 2021). Although this therapy's nature, content, techniques, and processes have been less frequently applied to adolescents, particularly girls facing emotional breakups, they can practically aid in reconstructing the cognition of adolescents facing emotional breakups (Kameoka et al., 2020). Supporting the effectiveness of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy, previous studies have documented its effectiveness on love trauma symptoms (Rajabi et al., 2018), reducing depression and its symptoms (de Haan et al., 2021; Mohajerin et al., 2023; Movahedi et al., 2019), reducing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (de Haan et al., 2021), and emotional and mood symptoms (Kameoka et al., 2020). Despite these findings, only a few studies have focused on adolescents facing emotional and romantic breakups.

Overall, the effort to help adolescent girls facing emotional breakups, considering adolescence is a period of striving for a better future, along with a review of the relevant background of Imago therapy for emotional breakups, which is newly developed and used for the first time in this study in Iran, highlights several points underscoring the importance and necessity of the present study. First, there have been fewer studies comparing Imago therapy for emotional breakups with well-known and widely used therapies like trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy for adolescent girls facing emotional breakups. This gap exists despite adolescence being a critical period for preparing adolescents to enter the path of growth and development with motivation and purpose. Second, the rationale for comparing Imago therapy for emotional breakups with trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy for the present study stems from the significant potential of Imago therapy in psychological treatments, despite limited results in adapting this therapy to the needs of adolescent

girls facing emotional breakups (Roddy et al., 2020). Additionally, the potential of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy for adolescent girls facing emotional breakups has not been adequately addressed, even outside Iran, as noted in a comprehensive review (Thielemann et al., 2022). Therefore, comparing Imago therapy for emotional breakups with trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy for adolescent girls is necessary to enhance intervention approaches for these girls. Thus, this study was conducted to answer the question: Does the effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakups differ from trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy on affective capital and depression in adolescent girls?

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This quasi-experimental study involved three groups: one group receiving Imago therapy for emotional breakups, one group receiving trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy, and a control group, with three phases: pre-test, post-test, and a two-month follow-up. The statistical population comprised high school girls in Isfahan in the spring and summer of 2022, attending three counseling and psychotherapy centers focused on adolescent issues in Isfahan (one center for each group). Forty-eight adolescent girls, 16 in each group, were purposefully selected based on inclusion criteria and then randomly assigned to three groups by simple random sampling (lottery). The sample size was determined based on the standard deviation of affective capital in a pilot study, which was 7.19, a Z value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level, a power test value of 90, a one-tailed Z value of 1.28, and a minimum error value (d) of 5.7, resulting in a sample size of 15 per group.

Inclusion criteria included obtaining written consent from adolescents and their parents, willingness to participate in the study, acceptance of group education principles, no chronic psychological disorders such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, no chronic physical disorders, not undergoing psychiatric treatment (medication), and being aged 15 to 18 years. Exclusion criteria included non-cooperation or unwillingness to continue participation, failure to complete assignments, and absence from two or more educational sessions. Ethical principles included confidentiality, data usage solely for research purposes, complete freedom for adolescents to continue participation, precise reporting of results upon request, and providing

control group training after completing the experimental groups' training.

Data were collected by randomly assigning participants to three groups: two experimental and one control. In the pre-test phase, adolescent girls completed the affective capital and Depression Questionnaires. The two therapy groups attended group therapy sessions at a counseling center, with each group undergoing ten 90-minute weekly sessions over 10 weeks. The control group received no treatment until the experimental groups' training was completed. The trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy group was treated using Free's (2007) protocol, previously validated in Iran (Rajabi et al., 2018). The Imago therapy package for emotional breakups was developed and initially validated in this study. The development process involved extracting main themes for the Imago therapy package from interviews with 25 adolescents facing emotional breakups using thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), achieving a content validity ratio (CVR) of 1 from three independent coders. Therapeutic techniques for each theme were then identified through conventional content analysis, and a panel of six expert psychologists with over 10 years of teaching and therapy experience determined the combination of educational techniques for the 10-session Imago therapy package. The final package was reviewed by six expert psychologists, achieving an overall agreement coefficient of .94. A preliminary pilot study confirmed the package's initial effectiveness on eight adolescent girls facing emotional breakups.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Affective Capital

This questionnaire, developed by Golparvar in 2016, consists of 20 items measuring three areas: positive quasi-emotions (10 items), feeling energetic (5 items), and happiness (5 items). The response scale is a five-point Likert scale (never = 1 to always = 5), with scores ranging from 20 to 100, where higher scores indicate higher levels of affective capital (Nourian et al., 2021). Its construct validity was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation, divergent validity through negative correlations with stress and burnout, and convergent validity through positive correlations with vitality and health resilience (Golparvar & Zareiy, 2018). The Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire ranged from .80 to .98 (Abdoli et al., 2021). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .78.

2.2.2. Depression

To measure depression, the Beck Depression Inventory-II, developed by Beck and Clark, was used (Beck et al., 1996). This inventory includes 21 items, each scored on a four-point scale indicating the severity of depression, with total scores ranging from 0 to 63. Psychometric studies have shown the inventory to have good validity and reliability (Rahimi, 2014). For example, Beck et al. reported a test-retest reliability of .93 over one week. This inventory has been used in various studies in Iran, with well-documented construct, differential, and reliability validation (Rahimi, 2014). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .82.

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Imago Therapy

Imago therapy for emotional breakup focuses on re-evaluating and correcting perceptions in significant relationships. It aims to address deep-seated emotional wounds and unconscious patterns formed in childhood that influence current relationships. This therapy is designed to help individuals understand and transform their inner conflicts, improve emotional resilience, and foster healthier relational dynamics. The intervention comprises ten sessions, each targeting specific therapeutic goals through a combination of analytical and experiential techniques (Beheshtinezhad et al., 2019; Movahedi et al., 2019; Nezami et al., 2022; Sheydanfar et al., 2021).

Session 1: Introduction, Contract, and Commencement

The first session involves introducing the therapist and group members to each other, discussing the conscious and unconscious reasons for relationship choices, and sharing experiences of emotional breakup. Members are introduced to Imago therapy concepts and relational imagery techniques. The session includes exercises such as house imagery and romantic love visualization, completing a self-awareness questionnaire, and assigning homework.

Session 2: Therapy Focused on Reasons for Choices and Causal Attributions

The second session reviews previous homework and delves deeper into the conscious and unconscious reasons for relationship choices and evaluative causal attributions. Techniques include Imago previewing, exploring relationship disappointments, and uncovering unconscious relational patterns. The session concludes with a summary and homework assignment.

Session 3: Therapy Focused on Weakened and Denied Self

In the third session, participants review their homework and focus on the deeply rooted weakened and denied self, particularly within the family context. Techniques involve uncovering the Imago structure, exploring childhood disappointments, and visualizing parental relationships. The session wraps up with a summary and homework.

Session 4: Continuation of Therapy on Weakened and Denied Self

The fourth session continues to focus on the weakened and denied self within the family context. Techniques include identifying the hidden and undeveloped self and revisiting the unconscious childhood image. The session ends with a summary and homework.

Session 5: Therapy Focused on Harmful Personality Tendencies

The fifth session reviews homework and focuses on harmful personality tendencies. Participants learn about attachment stages and explore techniques for uncovering childhood wounds in different developmental stages, including adapting to wounds from clingy, isolated, inflexible, and competitive incapacitated children. The session concludes with a summary and homework.

Session 6: Continuation of Therapy on Harmful Personality Tendencies and Causal Attributions

The sixth session reviews previous homework and further explores harmful personality tendencies and evaluative causal attributions. Techniques include adapting to wounds from solitary or sociable children, addressing the "big shot" or "little shot" complex, and removing the Imago mask. The session ends with a summary and homework.

Session 7: Therapy Focused on Ineffective Defenses and Causal Attributions

The seventh session reviews homework and focuses on ineffective defenses and evaluative causal attributions. Techniques include creating a safe haven, Hakomi therapy techniques, and identifying and describing emotions. The session concludes with a summary and homework.

Session 8: Continuation of Therapy on Ineffective Defenses and Unconscious Choices

The eighth session reviews homework and continues to focus on ineffective defenses and unconscious choices. Techniques involve love visualization, expressing and closing off excessive anger outlets, and changing negative behaviors. The session ends with a summary and homework.

Session 9: Continuation of Therapy on Ineffective Defenses

The ninth session reviews homework and continues focusing on ineffective defenses. Techniques include purposeful dialogue, reorganizing disappointments, and summarizing the session. Homework is assigned at the end.

Session 10: Continuation of Therapy on Ineffective Defenses and Conclusion

The final session reviews homework, continues focusing on ineffective defenses, and introduces techniques for requesting behavior change and engaging in enjoyable activities. The session concludes with a review and summarization of the therapy sessions.

2.3.2. *Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*

Trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) targets cognitive and behavioral modifications to address the impact of trauma, particularly emotional breakups. This intervention helps individuals reframe negative thoughts, manage emotions, and develop coping strategies. The therapy consists of ten sessions, each focusing on specific aspects of cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and behavioral adjustment (de Haan et al., 2021; Kameoka et al., 2020; Mohajerin et al., 2023; Thielemann et al., 2022).

Session 1: Introduction and Contract

The first session involves introducing the therapist and group members, discussing love and its types and reasons, addressing grief and its symptoms, and outlining the expectations and goals of TF-CBT. The structure of the sessions is reviewed.

Session 2: Case Conceptualization

The second session involves mental imagery exercises, conceptualizing thoughts (beliefs), feelings, and emotions, explaining the cognitive model, identifying core beliefs and negative automatic thoughts, and assigning homework to identify thoughts.

Session 3: Challenging Thoughts

The third session reviews previous homework, identifies triggering and maintaining situations, and teaches behavioral strategies such as distraction, leaving the situation, using social support, and engaging in pleasurable or relaxing activities. Homework is assigned.

Session 4: Practical Strategies

The fourth session reviews previous homework, introduces thought induction, challenges beliefs, and uses vertical arrow techniques (basic and advanced), practicing multiple vertical arrows, and voluntary cortex inhibition exercises. Homework is assigned.

Session 5: Core Beliefs

The fifth session reviews previous homework, identifies core beliefs, evaluates concerns and negative feelings, and replaces them with effective beliefs. Homework is assigned.

Session 6: Relaxation

The sixth session reviews previous homework, teaches relaxation techniques, self-punishment and self-reward strategies, maintenance strategies, information processing, and cognitive errors. Homework is assigned.

Session 7: Behavior Change

The seventh session reviews and discusses the sixth session's homework, tests beliefs, and introduces objective and standard analysis techniques. Homework is assigned.

Session 8: Cutting Ties with the Past

The eighth session reviews and discusses the seventh session's homework, practices Jacobson's 16-step relaxation, cuts ties with the memories of lost love, and addresses self-reward and self-punishment systems. Homework is assigned.

Session 9: Logical Analysis

The ninth session involves muscular relaxation, teaching and practicing effective and coordinated analysis, and assigning homework. The session also reviews the ninth session's homework, teaches and practices logical analysis, builds a hierarchy, and assigns homework.

Session 10: Conclusion and Summary

The final session reviews previous homework, summarizes the sessions, addresses concerns about ending therapy, and discusses relapse prevention.

2.4. Data analysis

For statistical analysis, assumptions such as normality (Shapiro-Wilk test), equality of error variances (Levene's test), equality of regression slopes (interaction analysis between pre-test and group membership), and equality of variance-covariance matrices (Box's M test) were checked. Means and standard deviations were calculated, followed by covariance analysis and Bonferroni post-hoc test. A moderate to high correlation ($.70$, $p < .01$) between affective capital and depression necessitated using covariance analysis instead of mixed variance analysis due to significant pre-test differences among groups. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, with significance levels of .05 to .001.

3. Findings and Results

The three study groups were compared in terms of father's age, mother's age, birth order, and number of children using the Chi-square test. The results of this analysis showed no significant differences between the three groups in the mentioned demographic variables. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of affective capital and depression, separated by the three study groups and the three stages: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The results of the analysis of the means of affective capital and depression showed that both the Imago therapy for emotional breakup group and the cognitive-behavioral therapy group showed more changes in the post-test and follow-up stages compared to the control group (Table 1).

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation of Affective Capital and Depression in the Research Groups at Three Time Points

Variable	Time	Control Group	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Group
		M	SD	M
Affective Capital	Pre-test	59.81	8.07	61.65
	Post-test	67.50	6.59	65.00
	Follow-up	65.62	4.22	63.54
Depression	Pre-test	35.81	9.71	39.41
	Post-test	39.50	6.17	25.58
	Follow-up	36.31	7.75	29.17

Before performing the covariance analysis, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test for affective capital and depression indicated that the distribution of these two variables was normal ($p \leq .05$), and the results of the Levene's test indicated that the variance of the study groups was equal for these two variables ($p \leq .05$). The M Box test for affective capital and depression also indicated the equality of the variance-covariance matrix and the interaction of group membership with the pre-test, indicating the equality of regression slopes ($p \leq .05$). After checking the assumptions, the results of the covariance analysis for the affective capital variable for the post-test ($F = 7.59$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$) and follow-up ($F = 10.15$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$) showed that after controlling for the pre-test effect, the group effect was significant, meaning that at least one of the Imago therapy for emotional breakup or cognitive-behavioral therapy

groups showed a significant difference with the control group in affective capital at the post-test and follow-up stages (Table 5). The results of the covariance analysis for depression showed that the group effect was significant in the post-test (F = 19.59, df = 2, p < .01) and follow-up (F = 21.90, df = 2, p < .01), meaning that at least one of the Imago therapy for emotional breakup or cognitive-behavioral therapy groups showed a significant difference with the control group in depression at the post-test and follow-up stages (Table 2).

Table 2

Results of Covariance Analysis for Affective Capital and Depression in Post-Test and Follow-Up

Variable and Source of Effect	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance	Partial Eta Squared	Power
Affective Capital (Post-test)							
Pre-test effect	65.90	1	65.90	1.24	.27	.03	.19
Group effect	802.89	2	401.45	7.59	.001	.25	.93
Error	2380.03	45	52.89				
Total	3303.63	48					
Affective Capital (Follow-up)							
Pre-test effect	35.64	1	35.64	1.34	.25	.03	.21
Group effect	537.83	2	268.92	10.15	.001	.31	.98
Error	1192.34	45	26.95				
Total	1799.06	48					
Depression (Post-test)							
Pre-test effect	2.34	1	2.34	.03	.97	.01	.05
Group effect	3240.70	2	1620.35	19.59	.001	.46	1.00
Error	3722.21	45	82.72				
Total	7009.06	48					
Depression (Follow-up)							
Pre-test effect	758.04	1	758.04	19.15	.001	.30	.99
Group effect	1733.34	2	866.67	21.90	.001	.49	1.00
Error	1780.86	45	39.57				
Total	4011.84	48					

To determine the pairwise differences between the three groups, the Bonferroni post-hoc test was performed. The results of the Bonferroni test showed that in the affective capital variable at the post-test and follow-up stages, there was a significant difference between the Imago therapy for emotional breakup and cognitive-behavioral therapy groups with the control group (p < .01), but there was no significant difference between the two therapies themselves (p > .05). In the post-test stage for depression, there was no significant difference between the two therapies (p > .05), but there was a significant difference between the two therapies and the control group (p < .01). At the follow-up stage for depression, there was a significant difference between the Imago therapy for emotional breakup and cognitive-behavioral therapy groups with the control group (p < .01), and cognitive-behavioral therapy showed significantly more stable effectiveness compared to Imago therapy for emotional breakup (p < .01) (Table 3).

Table 3

Results of Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test for Affective Capital and Depression

Variable	Row	Base Group	Comparison Group	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance
Affective Capital (Post-test)	1	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	2.74	2.54	.86
	2	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Control	9.75	2.58	.001
	3	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	Control	7.01	2.56	.03
Affective Capital (Follow-up)	1	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	2.27	1.80	.64
	2	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Control	7.98	1.82	.001
	3	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	Control	5.71	1.81	.009

Depression (Post-test)	1	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	-5.76	3.17	.23
	2	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Control	-19.75	3.24	.001
	3	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	Control	-13.99	3.21	.001
Depression (Follow-up)	1	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	-6.15	2.19	.002
	2	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Control	-14.78	2.24	.001
	3	Imago Therapy for Emotional Breakup	Control	-8.63	2.22	.001

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to compare the effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakup with trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy on affective capital and depression in adolescent girls. The results showed that both interventions were effective in enhancing affective capital and reducing depression in adolescent girls. However, in the follow-up stage, trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy showed significantly more stable effectiveness in reducing depression compared to Imago therapy for emotional breakup.

No studies were found that directly compared the effectiveness of Imago therapy with trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy or other similar therapies. Thus, the results of this study were compared with studies that examined either Imago therapy or cognitive-behavioral therapy separately on different populations of adolescent girls. The effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakup in enhancing affective capital and reducing depression in this study aligns with the findings of Roddy et al. (2020) on increasing relationship satisfaction, Movahedi et al. (2019) and Sheydanfar et al. (2021) on increasing marital satisfaction, and Beheshtinezhad et al. (2022) on reducing burnout (Beheshtinezhad et al., 2019; Rahimi, 2014; Sheydanfar et al., 2021). Although these studies did not include affective capital and depression as dependent variables, variables like happiness are aspects of affective capital, and other variables such as relationship satisfaction and burnout are related to affective capital and depression.

The effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakup in enhancing affective capital and reducing depression in adolescent girls can be explained by the specific therapeutic techniques and processes used in this therapy. The therapy addresses five main themes derived from interviews with adolescent girls who experienced emotional breakup: ineffective defenses, conscious and unconscious reasons for choices, family-centered weakened and denied self, evaluative causal attributions, and harmful personality tendencies. These themes reflect the fundamental needs of adolescent girls facing emotional breakups. The unique focus on these five needs distinguishes the Imago therapy for emotional breakup from conventional Imago therapy used in other studies.

Addressing these needs involves modifying ineffective and disabling defenses, understanding conscious and unconscious choices based on the Imago formed in childhood, freeing the weakened and denied self, moving away from evaluative causal attributions that weaken self-efficacy, and recognizing harmful personality traits to prevent future damage. These processes lead to liberating emotional, cognitive, and emotional energy, resulting in increased affective capital and reduced depression.

The study also showed that trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy was effective in enhancing affective capital and reducing depression in the post-test and follow-up stages. This finding aligns with studies by Rajabi et al. (2018) on the effectiveness of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy on love trauma in adolescent girls (Rajabi et al., 2018), Thielemann et al. (2022), and Kameoka et al. (2020) on its effectiveness on depression and its symptoms (Kameoka et al., 2020; Thielemann et al., 2022), Moayedfar et al. (2020) on its effectiveness on cognitive rumination and conventional cognitive-behavioral therapy in reducing depression symptoms (Moayedfar et al., 2020), and de Haan et al. (2021) on its effectiveness on positive emotional and mood states (de Haan et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy in enhancing affective capital and reducing depression in adolescent girls facing emotional breakup can be attributed to its strong focus on cognitive restructuring in thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and modifying behaviors and reactions to trauma or emotional breakup. Emotional breakups in adolescent girls often involve a significant range of negative thoughts and beliefs about oneself, including repetitive thoughts and rumination about personal inadequacy, unattractiveness, and self-blame. These negative evaluations and behaviors weaken self-esteem and foster hopelessness. The cycle of negative

JARAC
Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling
E-ISSN: 3041-8518

cognitive and behavioral events following an emotional breakup, coupled with memories of the failed relationship, leaves little room for positive emotions and vitality, thus reducing affective capital and increasing depression. Trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy interrupts this cycle by cognitive restructuring, replacing negative evaluations with more rational and positive thoughts, thus reducing depression symptoms and increasing affective capital.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Overall, the results of this study showed that both Imago therapy for emotional breakup and trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy are effective in enhancing affective capital and reducing depression in adolescent girls. However, in the follow-up stage, trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy showed more robust effectiveness in reducing depression compared to Imago therapy for emotional breakup. Since enhancing affective capital and reducing depression can significantly improve the psychosocial and functional conditions of adolescent girls facing emotional breakup, it is recommended that these two therapies be used as effective interventions for adolescent girls facing emotional breakup in counseling centers in education and private psychological counseling and treatment centers.

Finally, it should be noted that this study has limitations. The study was conducted on adolescent girls facing emotional breakup, so caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to young girls or groups of adolescent and young boys. Measurements in this study were conducted through questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias and not provide deep insights. For future research, it is suggested that researchers compare the effectiveness of Imago therapy for emotional breakup with cognitive-behavioral therapy on variables such as suicidal thoughts, hope for life, emotional and psychological well-being indices, and include deeper assessments through interviews alongside questionnaires.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

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.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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