


Design and Validation of an Emotional Intelligence Educational Package Based on Bar-On Theory Using Psychodrama for Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to design and validate an emotional intelligence educational package based on Bar-On's theory and implemented through psychodrama techniques for adolescent girls in foster care centers.

Methods and Materials: This applied developmental study was conducted in three stages. First, a twelve-session educational package was designed using Bar-On's emotional intelligence model as the theoretical framework and psychodrama as the methodological basis. Second, content validity was assessed by five experts using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI). Third, the package was piloted with five adolescents from foster care centers in Mashhad in 2024, followed by refinement and final implementation with fifteen adolescents residing in welfare residential homes. Data collection involved expert evaluations, facilitator observations, and participant feedback, while data analysis used both quantitative validation indices and qualitative thematic review of pilot outcomes.

Findings: Content validity indices indicated strong relevance and necessity for all package components (CVR = 1.00; CVI > 0.79). Expert consensus confirmed alignment of the sessions with Bar-On's theoretical dimensions of intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. Pilot results suggested improvements in adolescents' self-awareness, assertiveness, and independence.

Conclusion: The integration of Bar-On's emotional intelligence model with psychodrama techniques resulted in a validated, practical, and replicable training package. The program demonstrated effectiveness in improving core emotional and social skills, making it a promising intervention for adolescents in foster care settings. Its structured format, cultural adaptability, and experiential methodology highlight its potential for application in educational and clinical contexts.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Bar-On model; Psychodrama; Foster care; Adolescents; Educational package; Validation

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence has increasingly been recognized as a critical dimension of psychological functioning, particularly during adolescence, when individuals face complex emotional, social, and developmental challenges. The Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a multifaceted construct comprising intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood dimensions, which together support mental health, resilience, and adaptive functioning (Bar-On, 2006, 2010). Adolescence, marked by rapid changes in identity, autonomy, and peer relationships, is a stage where deficits in emotional intelligence may lead to difficulties in coping with stress, regulating emotions, and maintaining healthy relationships. This makes the promotion of emotional intelligence particularly crucial in this age group.

Among adolescents living in foster care and pseudo-family centers, challenges are even more pronounced. Studies show that these adolescents face multiple barriers to emotional well-being, including instability of attachment figures, limited access to consistent emotional support, and higher risks of psychological distress (Bashlideh & Ghorbanpour Lafmejani, 2023; Beshlideh & Ghorbanpour, 2023). Research has emphasized that teenage girls in such settings struggle with identity formation, self-esteem, and coping with trauma stemming from disrupted family systems (Fathi et al., 2024; Mozaffari, 2020). Adolescents transitioning out of care are often unprepared for independent living, facing additional social and emotional challenges (Sarem Pour et al., 2023). These conditions make it imperative to design interventions that directly address the emotional and psychological needs of this vulnerable population.

Psychodrama, as a therapeutic and educational method, has been widely used to facilitate emotional expression, social competence, and interpersonal learning. Originating from Moreno's work, psychodrama provides action-oriented techniques such as role reversal, mirroring, and role-playing to enable participants to explore emotions and relationships in a safe, creative space (Cruz et al., 2018). Reviews of psychodrama research demonstrate its effectiveness in enhancing emotional awareness, empathy, and social functioning across diverse populations (Lim et al., 2021; Ulusoy et al., 2023). Psychodrama also aligns closely with the goals of emotional intelligence development because it creates opportunities for practicing self-expression,

empathy, adaptability, and coping with stress in group settings (Pylypenko et al., 2023).

Recent scholarship highlights the application of psychodrama for adolescents. Systematic reviews have confirmed that psychodrama interventions can reduce internalizing and externalizing problems, improve communication, and enhance overall psychological adjustment (Maya et al., 2025; Ulusoy et al., 2023). Empirical studies further reveal that psychodrama facilitates self-discovery and interpersonal growth through enactment and experiential learning (Dudás-Simó, 2025). Its techniques allow adolescents to safely re-experience and reinterpret stressful situations, building resilience and healthier coping mechanisms (Homaei et al., 2022). Moreover, psychodrama-based group counseling has been implemented in schools to reduce communication anxiety among adolescents, with positive results (Sasono et al., 2025).

Despite these promising findings, there remains a gap in structured intervention programs that explicitly integrate psychodrama techniques with established emotional intelligence frameworks such as Bar-On's model. The Bar-On theory provides a systematic structure of emotional competencies, while psychodrama offers practical, experiential methods for embodying and practicing these skills in real time. The integration of these two approaches may provide a uniquely effective training package for adolescents, particularly those in vulnerable contexts such as foster care centers.

Adolescents in foster care often exhibit elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and feelings of social isolation (Schlund et al., 2024). Such psychosocial vulnerabilities can be mitigated through group-based interventions that foster social support, empathy, and the capacity to regulate emotions effectively. Group psychotherapy research emphasizes the benefits of structured, interactive interventions in building cohesion and psychological well-being (Rosendahl et al., 2021). Psychodrama, with its focus on action and spontaneity, enhances these processes by allowing adolescents to actively rehearse new emotional and social roles. In addition, psychodrama is particularly suitable for adolescents because it combines playfulness, creativity, and symbolic enactment with therapeutic aims (Štimac, 2021).

Theoretical developments in psychodrama and group psychotherapy also stress the importance of integration after role-playing experiences. Without structured integration, participants may not fully transfer learning into daily life.

Research highlights that reflection and meaning-making following psychodramatic enactments are essential to consolidate gains in emotional regulation and interpersonal skills (Nugent & Foster, 2025). The proposed package therefore incorporates structured debriefing and reflective discussions in each session to ensure sustained learning.

Drama therapy research further supports the potential of psychodramatic methods to improve relational functioning and address complex trauma among young people (Drapeau, 2025). Adolescents in foster care are often affected by traumatic experiences, making approaches that combine emotional safety with active exploration especially important. By engaging adolescents in role-playing scenarios that mirror their lived experiences, psychodrama creates opportunities to confront trauma, explore alternative perspectives, and develop resilience.

Beyond the therapeutic dimension, psychodrama also intersects with educational objectives. Emotional intelligence is not only a clinical concern but also a predictor of academic achievement, peer relationships, and long-term well-being (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2021). The nine-layer pyramid model of emotional intelligence underscores the developmental nature of emotional competencies, highlighting the need for interventions that progressively build skills from basic self-awareness to higher-order socio-emotional capacities (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2021). This developmental orientation aligns with Bar-On's emphasis on the multidimensional nature of emotional-social intelligence (Bar-On, 2006).

The development of structured packages for adolescents is consistent with the growing interest in standardized, replicable interventions in group psychotherapy (Rosendahl et al., 2021). The inclusion of manuals and detailed session structures enhances the scalability and research utility of interventions. A psychodrama-based emotional intelligence package provides a dual advantage: it draws upon the rigor of an established psychological model while offering the experiential richness of creative group methods (Falko von Ameln & Abel, 2024). This integration is particularly innovative in contexts where adolescents face unique psychosocial barriers, such as foster care centers in Iran, where challenges of autonomy, resilience, and social adaptation are acute (Fathi et al., 2024; Mozaffari, 2020).

Practical guidelines for adolescent care emphasize the importance of psychosocial interventions that strengthen resilience and social competence (Sarem Pour et al., 2023). Foster care centers provide shelter and basic needs but often lack structured emotional training programs. Studies of lived

experience among adolescent girls in these centers underscore feelings of loneliness, emotional deprivation, and the need for structured support to develop coping and communication skills (Bashldeh & Ghorbanpour Lafmejani, 2023; Beshldeh & Ghorbanpour, 2023). By embedding Bar-On's emotional intelligence framework into psychodrama sessions, the designed package directly addresses these needs, targeting both individual emotional awareness and group-level social functioning.

Furthermore, psychodrama as a group-based experiential learning process has a unique cultural and developmental fit for adolescents. Its techniques of role reversal, mirroring, and projection create symbolic opportunities for adolescents to experiment with identities and practice empathy. Systematic reviews confirm the effectiveness of these techniques in increasing spontaneity, adaptability, and relational skills (Cruz et al., 2018; Maya et al., 2025). The inclusion of structured warm-ups, enactments, and reflective discussions ensures that adolescents are not only exposed to emotional experiences but also guided in integrating them into daily life (Nugent & Foster, 2025).

Taken together, the convergence of Bar-On's theoretical model with psychodrama's applied techniques provides a strong foundation for the present study. Bar-On's model identifies the core dimensions of emotional intelligence, while psychodrama offers practical tools to cultivate them in a group setting. Adolescents in foster care are in urgent need of such integrative interventions, as they face compounded psychosocial challenges and limited access to supportive environments. By designing and validating a psychodrama-based emotional intelligence training package, this study aims to create a structured, replicable, and culturally appropriate program that addresses both theoretical and practical gaps.

2. Methods and Materials

The present study employed an applied developmental design with a focus on designing, validating, and piloting an educational intervention aimed at improving emotional intelligence in adolescent girls. The research was carried out in three distinct phases that ensured both the scientific validity of the intervention package and its practical applicability in real-world educational settings. Participants were selected from among adolescent girls residing in Welfare foster care centers in Mashhad in 2024. For the pilot phase, a small group of five adolescents meeting the inclusion criteria—namely, age range between 13 and 18

years, residency in the foster care centers, and willingness to participate in group-based sessions—was engaged. This selection allowed for the testing of the intervention in a controlled and manageable setting before broader implementation. Ethical considerations were respected at all stages of the study, including obtaining informed consent from both the adolescents and their legal guardians as well as securing approval from the relevant ethics committee.

The development of the educational package took place in several sub-stages. Initially, Bar-On's theory of emotional intelligence served as the foundational framework. This theory emphasizes intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood as core components of emotional intelligence. Psychodrama methods were integrated into the design to provide experiential, action-based learning that could enhance the effectiveness of the intervention for adolescents. A needs assessment was conducted based on the specific psychosocial challenges faced by girls in foster care, and the package was structured into twelve sequential sessions. Each session included warm-up activities, main psychodrama exercises aligned with emotional intelligence sub-components, and reflective discussions to consolidate learning.

For validation of the package content, expert judgment was sought. Five specialists in the fields of psychology, educational sciences, and psychodrama reviewed the materials. The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI) were employed as quantitative indices to assess the relevance, clarity, and necessity of each session component. According to Lawshe's method, CVR values above the minimum threshold and CVI values above 0.79 were considered acceptable. Based on the experts' evaluations, minor revisions were introduced to improve session clarity, ensure cultural appropriateness, and refine the psychodramatic exercises for the target age group.

Following the validation process, the package underwent pilot implementation. A small group of five adolescents participated in the twelve-session intervention, which was facilitated by a trained psychodrama practitioner. The sessions were conducted twice a week over a six-week period in the Welfare foster care centers' counseling rooms. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and included warm-up, role-play, enactment, and sharing phases. Field observations, facilitator notes, and feedback from

participants were systematically recorded. At the conclusion of the pilot phase, these data were analyzed qualitatively to identify strengths, limitations, and areas for adjustment in the package content and delivery method. Final revisions were made based on the outcomes of this pilot study, ensuring that the package was both theoretically grounded and practically effective.

Data analysis in this study was conducted in two phases corresponding to validation and piloting. For the validation phase, expert evaluations were quantified through CVR and CVI indices, providing statistical evidence of content validity. These calculations were performed manually using Lawshe's formula and standard CVI procedures. In the pilot phase, the analysis was primarily descriptive and qualitative, focusing on participants' engagement, observed behavioral changes during sessions, and their subjective feedback. Thematic review of facilitator notes and participant comments helped identify recurring themes such as increased self-awareness, improved emotional expression, and enhanced peer interaction. This dual analytic approach provided both numerical confirmation of the package's validity and practical insights into its usability and impact.

3. Findings and Results

The findings of the developmental stage of this study are presented based on the design and pilot implementation of the emotional intelligence training package constructed around Bar-On's theory and enriched with psychodrama techniques. The package included twelve structured sessions, each targeting a specific dimension of emotional intelligence, and was implemented with adolescent girls from foster care centers in Mashhad. Observations from the pilot group, facilitator reports, and participant feedback revealed the relevance and feasibility of the package in fostering intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and the development of a positive mood. The sessions were sequenced to build upon one another, beginning with self-awareness and progressing toward higher-order emotional competencies such as empathy, stress regulation, and optimism. A summary of the sessions is provided in the table below, followed by detailed reporting of each session's structure, objectives, and observed outcomes.

Table 1

Overview of the Twelve Sessions of the Emotional Intelligence Training Package Based on Bar-On Theory and Psychodrama

Session	Focus Area	Main Objectives	Key Techniques
1	Intrapersonal skills (self-awareness)	Recognition of strengths, preferences, and personal characteristics	Role reversal, monologue, mirror, spectrum mapping
2	Intrapersonal skills (assertiveness, self-respect)	Expressing abilities, self-assertion, defending personal rights	Body games, monologue, pair technique
3	Intrapersonal skills (self-actualization, independence)	Practicing autonomy, creativity, spontaneity	Spontaneity, confrontation, projection, role replacement
4	Interpersonal skills (awareness of others' emotions I)	Interpreting facial expressions and body language	Role training, recognition of facial/body expressions
5	Interpersonal skills (empathy)	Understanding and appreciating others' emotions	Role reversal, sociometry, confrontation
6	Interpersonal skills (social responsibility)	Strengthening responsibility toward society	Role training, emotional recognition
7	Adaptability (emotional flexibility I)	Deliberate change of emotions based on context	Pair technique, imaginative enactment
8	Adaptability (flexibility II)	Regulating emotions and behavior under changing conditions	Role play, diverse emotional enactments
9	Stress management (coping with stress I)	Enhancing tolerance to stress and impulse control	Future projection, imaginative enactment, pair technique
10	Stress management (coping with stress II)	Creativity in stress management, strengthening self-confidence	Role fragmentation, use of mediating objects, role play
11	General mood (positive emotion and optimism)	Enhancing happiness, optimism, positive focus	Self-realization, imagery, spontaneity, creative play
12	Closing and evaluation	Reviewing achievements and preparing for group termination	Group sharing, reflective discussion

In the first session, the focus was on developing intrapersonal skills through enhancing self-awareness. Participants were introduced to the structure and goals of the psychodrama group and engaged in activities such as identity-recognition role play, the mirror technique, and the “dark room” exercise. Through these methods, adolescents were encouraged to articulate their strengths, preferences, and unique characteristics, which helped them recognize their individuality and express positive attributes in a group setting.

The second session centered on building assertiveness and respect for self. Through preparatory warm-ups, role enactments, and psychodramatic activities in simulated contexts such as restaurants and workplaces, participants practiced self-assertion and verbal self-expression. The monologue and pair techniques were employed, as well as body-based games, which enabled the adolescents to defend personal rights constructively and strengthen their sense of self-worth.

The third session aimed at promoting self-actualization and independence. Adolescents practiced autonomy through improvised enactments such as “Five Years Later” and role plays focusing on personal achievements, goals, and aspirations. Exercises encouraged creativity, spontaneity, and self-directed thinking. Techniques such as role confrontation, projection, and role substitution were used,

which reinforced the adolescents’ capacity to act independently and imaginatively in varying contexts.

The fourth session introduced interpersonal skill-building with a focus on awareness of others’ emotions. Through dramatized activities like “The Strange Party” and games such as “Two Truths and a Lie,” participants practiced decoding facial expressions and body language. These activities heightened their ability to link social cues with emotional states of peers, thereby deepening social perceptiveness.

The fifth session emphasized empathy and mutual understanding. Adolescents engaged in visualizing others’ emotional worlds and performed enactments that allowed them to experience different perspectives. Exercises such as role reversal and the sociometric technique enabled participants to appreciate others’ experiences, practice giving and receiving compliments, and strengthen reciprocal relationships.

In the sixth session, social responsibility was highlighted. Psychodramatic practices such as role-playing interrogations, simulating future social roles, and conducting mock job interviews were employed. These helped adolescents internalize the value of accountability within their communities, thus extending emotional intelligence from self and peers to broader social contexts.

The seventh session focused on adaptability, specifically the ability to shift emotions in response to situational

demands. Through circle-based emotional exchanges and dramatizations like the “Bus Game,” participants practiced recognizing and intentionally altering their emotional states. These exercises facilitated flexibility in emotional expression and increased awareness of situational appropriateness.

The eighth session expanded adaptability skills with an emphasis on emotional and behavioral flexibility. Through dramatizations such as “The Park Bench,” “Family Portrait,” and “The Box of Secrets,” adolescents were challenged to regulate emotions and thoughts during shifts in context. These activities promoted resilience, allowing participants to adjust to changes constructively.

The ninth session addressed stress management, specifically coping with stress and impulse control. Exercises such as improvising as “talking objects” and re-enacting worrisome future events enabled adolescents to externalize stressors and rehearse coping strategies. Psychodramatic techniques including projection into the future and imaginative enactment facilitated awareness of stress triggers and increased emotional control.

The tenth session continued stress management, focusing on creativity and self-confidence in handling tension. Techniques such as role fragmentation, use of mediating objects (e.g., masks, dolls, fabrics), and role-playing in challenging scenarios encouraged adolescents to explore innovative coping strategies. These experiences strengthened their resilience and reinforced positive self-image under pressure.

The eleventh session emphasized the cultivation of positive emotions and optimism. Through designing “emotional control panels” and engaging in imagery-based activities, adolescents practiced focusing on positive emotional states. Techniques such as self-realization, imagination, and creative games helped participants internalize joy, optimism, and appreciation of life’s positive aspects.

The twelfth and final session was devoted to closure and evaluation. Participants reviewed their experiences across all previous sessions, articulated the emotional and social skills they had acquired, and reflected on the personal impact of the program. Group sharing allowed each participant to express insights and consolidate learning, marking a constructive conclusion to the intervention.

The practical development of the educational package was the final stage of the design process, where psychodrama techniques were integrated with the theoretical principles of Bar-On’s emotional intelligence model. At this

stage, the aim was to ensure that the proposed exercises could be implemented in a step-by-step and applied manner, thereby assisting adolescents in broadening their emotional horizons and enhancing their emotional intelligence capacities. The order of the sessions was carefully structured according to the sequence outlined in the earlier table, so that each objective could be progressively addressed using appropriate dramatic methods. A complete description of all practical exercises is provided in Appendix I of this study, where each step is documented in detail for practical reference.

The final compilation of the package was carried out in the form of a structured manual designed for psychologists and practitioners. The manual included lesson plans for each session, presenting both general and specific objectives, along with detailed implementation steps. This design aimed to provide a replicable framework that could be applied consistently across different settings.

To establish content validity, the package was submitted for expert review by five specialists familiar with emotional intelligence theory and psychodrama. In the first phase, experts evaluated the necessity of each session component using a three-point Likert scale with the options “essential,” “useful but not essential,” and “not necessary.” In the second phase, they assessed the relevance of the package content to the Bar-On model of emotional intelligence using a four-point scale ranging from “not relevant” to “highly relevant.”

The results were analyzed using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and the Content Validity Index (CVI). The CVR was calculated according to Lawshe’s method, where the formula compares the number of experts who identified an item as essential against the total number of experts. In this study, all five experts rated each item as essential, resulting in a CVR value of 1.00 for all components. Since this exceeded the minimum acceptable value of 0.99 for five experts, the package was confirmed to possess strong content validity. Similarly, the CVI scores exceeded the 0.79 threshold, indicating that the items were sufficiently relevant to the theoretical constructs of emotional intelligence. These findings confirmed that the package met the required standards of content validity.

Following validation, the package was piloted in a group of five adolescents from foster care centers. This pilot implementation allowed the research team to adapt the content to the specific psychological characteristics of adolescents and to identify potential obstacles in practice. Based on observations, certain exercises were revised to better fit the adolescents’ engagement levels, while

maintaining theoretical alignment with Bar-On's model. After these revisions, the finalized version of the package was produced in two formats: a participant workbook and a facilitator's guide. Both were organized into twelve sessions, including explanations, exercises, and guidance for implementation. The final version was subsequently implemented with a group of fifteen adolescents residing in foster care centers.

The practical advantages of this package distinguish it from other interventions in the field of emotional intelligence. The integration of psychodrama as a core method made the program both age-appropriate and engaging for adolescents. The use of innovative and diverse exercises ensured active participation, while the structured manual and scientific framework enhanced replicability and comparability with other tools. These strengths provide a solid foundation for the future use of the package in both research and applied educational contexts.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the emotional intelligence training package designed on the basis of Bar-On's model and implemented through psychodrama techniques was effective in improving key emotional and social skills among adolescent girls in foster care centers. The structured twelve-session program successfully addressed multiple dimensions of emotional intelligence, including intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal understanding, adaptability, stress management, and the cultivation of positive mood. Feedback from participants, facilitator observations, and expert validation indicated that the package was both relevant and practical for this population. The systematic validation process, which used CVR and CVI indices, further confirmed the content validity of the package, while pilot implementation confirmed its feasibility and adaptability to the needs of adolescent girls in institutional care.

One of the key outcomes was the enhancement of intrapersonal skills, particularly self-awareness, assertiveness, and independence. Adolescents were able to articulate their strengths, recognize emotions, and practice assertive communication through psychodramatic exercises such as role reversal and mirroring. These findings align with Bar-On's emphasis on intrapersonal competencies as foundational to emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2006, 2010). Previous studies have similarly shown that psychodrama can enhance self-expression and autonomy in

adolescents by providing a safe environment for practicing new roles and behaviors (Cruz et al., 2018; Homaei et al., 2022). The observed increase in participants' ability to express personal needs and respect their own identity resonates with the literature on psychodrama-based counseling for adolescents, which highlights reductions in communication anxiety and improvements in assertiveness (Sasono et al., 2025).

Another important result was the improvement in interpersonal skills, specifically empathy and social responsibility. Adolescents practiced decoding nonverbal cues, appreciating others' feelings, and role-playing social scenarios that required accountability. These findings are consistent with studies that show psychodrama facilitates empathy development and relational growth by enabling participants to "step into the shoes" of others (Pylypenko et al., 2023; Ulusoy et al., 2023). Group psychotherapy literature underscores that interactive, action-based methods enhance group cohesion and empathy among participants (Rosendahl et al., 2021). Furthermore, the results confirm that adolescents in foster care, who often report difficulties with social understanding and empathy (Bashlideh & Ghorbanpour Lafmejani, 2023; Beshlideh & Ghorbanpour, 2023), can benefit substantially from interventions that focus explicitly on these competencies.

The findings also revealed significant progress in adaptability and stress management, two dimensions of Bar-On's model that are closely linked with resilience. Exercises that required adolescents to intentionally change emotions based on context, or to enact stressful scenarios, contributed to improved coping skills and emotional flexibility. These outcomes are aligned with systematic reviews indicating that psychodrama fosters adaptability, spontaneity, and resilience (Lim et al., 2021; Maya et al., 2025). Moreover, adolescents who participated in stress-management sessions reported greater confidence in their ability to regulate emotions and handle tension. This corresponds to research emphasizing the role of psychodrama in building creative problem-solving and stress tolerance (Homaei et al., 2022; Nugent & Foster, 2025).

Equally important was the cultivation of positive mood and optimism. Adolescents engaged in exercises that encouraged them to focus on positive emotions, imagine future possibilities, and engage in creative play. These findings reflect Bar-On's assertion that optimism and well-being are integral to emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2010). Drama therapy research also supports the capacity of psychodrama to foster positive relational experiences and

alleviate trauma-related negative affect (Drapeau, 2025). By encouraging adolescents to reframe their experiences and focus on strengths, the intervention provided tools for building hope and psychological well-being.

The validation process itself provided additional support for the robustness of the package. The unanimous expert ratings of “essential” across all components highlight the theoretical and practical soundness of the design. High CVR and CVI values indicate that the package adequately represented the construct of emotional intelligence and was aligned with the Bar-On model. This echoes the importance of ensuring strong content validity in psychological intervention packages, as stressed by previous methodological literature (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2021; Falko von Ameln & Abel, 2024). The careful validation and iterative revisions contributed to a structured, replicable, and scientifically rigorous intervention.

The results also align with contextual literature on adolescents in foster care. Prior studies emphasize that these adolescents often experience low levels of self-esteem, difficulties in establishing independence, and challenges in coping with social demands (Fathi et al., 2024; Mozaffari, 2020). The observed improvements in emotional intelligence competencies indicate that psychodrama-based interventions can address these vulnerabilities by strengthening intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities. Psychodrama has been shown to be particularly effective in contexts of trauma and relational deprivation, as it provides both emotional release and social learning (Drapeau, 2025; Ulusoy et al., 2023). By situating the intervention within the foster care setting, this study demonstrates that structured group-based emotional intelligence training can mitigate some of the psychosocial risks faced by institutionalized adolescents.

Moreover, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on the educational and developmental applications of psychodrama. Beyond therapeutic outcomes, psychodrama offers significant potential for structured educational programming that builds emotional intelligence competencies (Maya et al., 2025). Adolescents benefit from the integration of experiential methods with theoretical frameworks, as demonstrated in this study’s combination of psychodrama techniques with Bar-On’s model. This aligns with broader educational perspectives that stress the importance of emotional and social learning in adolescence as predictors of long-term well-being and success (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2021).

The results also echo international developments in psychodrama research. A scientometric review revealed growing evidence for the effectiveness of psychodrama across diverse clinical and educational contexts (Lim et al., 2021). Recent explorations of psychodrama as an intervention for internal and external adolescent problems confirm its versatility and effectiveness (Ulusoy et al., 2023). The current study’s findings are in line with these global trends, while also contributing context-specific insights into the application of psychodrama in Iranian foster care centers.

An additional dimension highlighted by this study is the role of integration after psychodrama sessions. The reflective and debriefing segments of each session allowed adolescents to consolidate their learning and apply it to real-life contexts. This reflects existing scholarship emphasizing the necessity of structured integration to ensure the transfer of psychodramatic experiences into daily functioning (Nugent & Foster, 2025). Without such integration, the transformative potential of psychodrama may be limited. The inclusion of integration phases in this package thus strengthened its effectiveness and sustainability.

The creative techniques used, including role-play, improvisation, and enactment, contributed to high engagement and experiential learning. Literature on drama therapy and psychodrama confirms the value of these techniques in facilitating exploration of identity, emotions, and relationships in adolescence (Cruz et al., 2018; Štimac, 2021). The present study’s findings are consistent with such evidence, underscoring the developmental appropriateness of psychodrama for this age group.

Finally, the intervention’s outcomes contribute to the growing recognition of the importance of culturally adapted and context-specific programs. Adolescents in Iranian foster care centers face unique sociocultural and structural challenges (Schlund et al., 2024). By tailoring the intervention to their lived experiences, this study ensured relevance and acceptability. Such contextualization is critical, as emphasized by guidelines for care and upbringing in welfare centers (Sarem Pour et al., 2023). The success of this package therefore lies not only in its theoretical and methodological rigor but also in its practical fit for the target population.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite the strengths of the study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the pilot and final

implementations involved relatively small sample sizes, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The use of adolescents from foster care centers in one city restricts the applicability of results to broader populations of adolescents. Second, although the CVR and CVI indices provided strong evidence of content validity, the study did not include long-term follow-up to assess the sustainability of outcomes. Third, self-report and observational measures were primarily used, and no randomized control group was included, which may affect the ability to attribute improvements exclusively to the intervention. Lastly, while the psychodrama approach is experiential and engaging, it requires trained facilitators, which may pose challenges for scalability in resource-limited settings.

Future research should expand the sample size and include adolescents from diverse geographic and cultural contexts to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the durability of emotional intelligence gains and their impact on broader outcomes such as academic performance, resilience, and independent living skills. Incorporating randomized controlled trial designs would strengthen causal inferences regarding the effectiveness of the package. Future studies could also explore digital adaptations of psychodrama and emotional intelligence training, considering the increasing importance of technology-based interventions for adolescents. Comparative studies between psychodrama-based and other emotional intelligence training methods would provide valuable insights into relative effectiveness and best practices.

From a practical perspective, the study underscores the importance of integrating emotional intelligence training into the support services provided to adolescents in foster care centers. Practitioners and educators can benefit from the structured manual and workbook developed in this study, which provide clear guidelines for implementation. Training programs for psychologists, counselors, and educators should incorporate psychodrama techniques as effective tools for enhancing adolescents' socio-emotional competencies. The package's replicability makes it a valuable resource for schools, welfare organizations, and mental health services. By embedding such programs in institutional care, practitioners can support adolescents in developing resilience, coping strategies, and emotional competencies that are critical for their transition into adulthood.

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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 equally contributed to this article.

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