

Effectiveness of Self-Regulation–Based Couple Therapy on Marital Adjustment and Positive Thinking Among Married Employees in Healthcare Centers

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

This paragraph is conceptually strong but lacks empirical citations from the last five years to justify the contemporary relevance of marital systems research. Consider integrating recent meta-analytic findings or global statistics to contextualize why marital adjustment is an urgent psychological topic.

The sentence “Predictive models have demonstrated that variables such as psychological flexibility, frustration intolerance, and self-compassion can meaningfully shape marital adjustment...” would benefit from specifying which predictive models or theoretical frameworks were used in these studies. Adding detail would improve theoretical transparency.

The paragraph describing infidelity research (quoting “infidelity... illustrates the importance of restoring self-regulation capacities”) presents strong claims without acknowledging contradictory findings showing that some infidelity cases require trauma-focused rather than self-regulation-focused modalities. A balanced discussion would strengthen the argument.

In the “Study Design and Participants” section, the authors note: “from Center No. 2, a total of 30 individuals were selected...”. However, the initial population included employees from two centers. It is unclear why all participants were drawn only from Center No. 2. This threatens external validity and requires clarification.

In the paragraph stating “individuals scoring below 75 on the Marital Adjustment Scale and below 90 on the Positive Thinking Questionnaire were selected...”, the rationale for these cutoffs is not provided. Are these clinically meaningful thresholds? The authors should justify the selection criteria with citations or normative data.

The description of the Positive Thinking Questionnaire includes extensive psychometric history. However, the authors do not report reliability coefficients for their own sample. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) must be reported for this study’s data to ensure measurement validity.

In Table 2, the section labeled “Total” lists the total SS for each variable but does not include df or MS. For clarity and completeness, standard ANCOVA tables typically include all columns. Consider revising for consistency.

The discussion begins with: “These results clearly support the theoretical assumption that self-regulatory processes play a decisive role...”. However, it does not address alternative explanations such as placebo effects, therapist enthusiasm, or social desirability, which should be acknowledged to strengthen the interpretation.

The paragraph noting improvement in communication patterns states: “These findings mirror existing evidence...”. However, the authors do not discuss whether improvements may be due to general therapeutic factors (e.g., attention, empathy) rather than specific self-regulation mechanisms. Clarification is needed.

The sentence “This pattern supports further evidence showing that when couples enhance their emotional self-regulation abilities...” implicitly assumes that improvements in outcome measures indicate enhanced self-regulation skills. But the study did not measure self-regulation directly. This logical leap should be corrected or acknowledged.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The sentence “This developmental flexibility in early marital stages can reduce the likelihood of future marital burnout...” appears speculative without longitudinal evidence. Consider clarifying whether this claim is based on longitudinal studies or is theoretical extrapolation.

This paragraph cites “Gottman-based therapeutic interventions... enhance emotional self-regulation” but does not explain how these findings conceptually integrate with self-regulation-based couple therapy, which is the focus of this study. A clearer conceptual bridge between Gottman theory and the intervention used would be helpful.

When discussing domestic violence, the sentence “self-regulation deficits may intensify destructive relational cycles” lacks mention of potential confounds (e.g., personality disorders, substance use). The authors should acknowledge factors that interact with self-regulation deficits to avoid oversimplification.

The intervention section (Sessions 1–9) describes activities such as “participants created a list of strengths and weaknesses.” It is unclear whether a standardized manual was used or whether the sessions relied on clinician judgment. More detail is needed about treatment fidelity, adherence checks, or supervision.

The sentence “The data obtained were analyzed using univariate and multivariate ANCOVA...” should include information about the covariates entered in each model. Although pretest scores were mentioned earlier, explicit identification of covariates is required for methodological transparency.

Table 1 shows clear improvements in the experimental group, yet the narrative in the paragraph following Table 1 lacks effect size interpretation. Adding standardized mean differences (Cohen’s d) would allow readers to understand the magnitude of change at a descriptive level.

In the paragraph discussing statistical assumptions, the authors state “no multicollinearity was detected among the dependent variables.” Since the dependent variables are conceptually related marital subscales, the authors should provide the actual correlation matrix or VIF values to support this claim.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.