

# The Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Psychotherapy and Counseling in Married Women with Vaginismus

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the first paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence “vaginismus is increasingly understood as a multidimensional condition rooted in emotional, cognitive, relational, and sociocultural processes” would benefit from a clearer conceptual model. Please explicitly state how these dimensions interact (e.g., emotion → avoidance → relational strain) to strengthen the theoretical coherence.

The second paragraph of the Introduction references sociocultural stigma but remains general. Please expand this paragraph by specifying Iran-specific cultural or marital norms that may intensify emotional inhibition or sexual avoidance, thereby strengthening contextual relevance.

The sentence “participants were randomly assigned to either the emotion-focused intervention group or the control group” requires clarification. Please specify the randomization method (e.g., simple randomization, sealed envelopes) to enhance internal validity.

In the Methods section, the control group is not adequately described. Please clarify whether the control group received treatment-as-usual, wait-list status, or no intervention, as this directly affects interpretation of effect sizes.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

### 1.2. *Reviewer 2*

Reviewer:

In the third Introduction paragraph, CBT is discussed extensively, while emotion-focused approaches are introduced later. Consider adding a brief comparative sentence early on explaining why emotion-focused psychotherapy may address limitations of CBT, to improve narrative flow.

In the fourth Introduction paragraph, the manuscript states that maladaptive emotional processing is central to vaginismus. Please specify which emotional mechanisms (e.g., primary fear vs. secondary shame) are hypothesized mediators of change, as this will align better with your outcome measures.

The final sentence of the Introduction clearly states the aim; however, consider adding whether the study targets symptom reduction only or also emotional/relational transformation, as implied earlier in the text.

In Methods – Study Design and Participants, the use of purposive and convenience sampling is stated but not justified. Please add a brief methodological rationale explaining why probability sampling was not feasible in this clinical context.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.