




Comparison of the Effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy and Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Emotional Expressiveness in Couples with Conflict

Davoud. Zamani Khormandichali¹, Asghar. Noruzi^{2*}, Kolsoum. Akbarnataj Bisheh³


¹ PhD Student in General Psychology, Department of Psychology, Sar.C., Islamic Azad University, Sari, Iran

² Department of Psychology, Sar.C., Islamic Azad University, Sari, Iran



³ Department of Nursing, Sar.C., Islamic Azad University, Sari, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: asg.noruzi@iau.ir

Editor

Anela Hasanagic
Full Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Islamic Education, University of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina
anela.hasanagic@unze.ba

Reviewers

Reviewer 1: Ali Akbar Soleymanian
Associate Professor of Counseling Department, Bojnord University, Iran. Email: Soleymanian@ub.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Mohammadreza Zarbakhsh Bahri
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran. Email: M.Zarbakhsh@Toniau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning with “Marital relationships constitute one of the most fundamental interpersonal systems affecting psychological well-being,” the literature review is broad and descriptive but lacks a cohesive conceptual framework integrating attachment theory, cognitive-behavioral theory, and systemic relational models. The authors should strengthen the theoretical integration by explicitly explaining how emotional expressiveness operates differently within cognitive-behavioral and emotionally focused paradigms.

The paragraph discussing emotional expressiveness includes references to artificial intelligence and robotic interactions (“scholars have increasingly examined emotional expressiveness not only within human relationships but also in artificial intelligence...”). This inclusion appears conceptually disconnected from the study’s focus on couple therapy and marital conflict. The authors should either provide a stronger rationale for this interdisciplinary comparison or remove these references to maintain conceptual coherence and theoretical focus.

The intervention descriptions are extensive and informative; however, the manuscript does not indicate whether treatment fidelity was assessed. For example, in the paragraph describing the emotionally focused intervention, no information is provided regarding therapist training, supervision, adherence checklists, or fidelity monitoring. Without fidelity assessment, it is difficult to determine whether the interventions were implemented consistently across sessions and participants.

The manuscript states that “neutral content was presented to the control group,” yet the nature of this neutral content is not explained. The authors should specify whether the control group received psychoeducation, minimal contact, waitlist status, or another form of placebo-like intervention, because the type of control condition substantially affects interpretation of treatment efficacy.

The article does not clarify whether husbands and wives were analyzed as independent observations or dyadic units. Since couple-based research inherently involves interdependence between partners’ responses, the use of conventional repeated-measures ANOVA may violate independence assumptions. The authors should justify why dyadic analytic methods such as Actor–Partner Interdependence Models (APIM) were not employed.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The manuscript repeatedly cites studies on marital conflict and relational distress; however, the review does not critically distinguish between studies conducted in Western cultural contexts and those conducted in Iranian populations. Given the cultural sensitivity of emotional expression and marital communication, the article requires a deeper discussion of how Iranian sociocultural norms may influence emotional expressiveness and therapeutic responsiveness.

The statement “the present study was classified as applied research, and in terms of data collection, it was a cross-sectional study with a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design” contains a methodological inconsistency. A study involving pretest, posttest, and follow-up measurements is longitudinal rather than cross-sectional. The authors should revise the methodological terminology to avoid conceptual inaccuracies in the design description.

The sampling procedure requires greater methodological transparency. Although the manuscript states that “45 couples were selected through purposive non-random sampling,” the process through which couples were screened, approached, and recruited from counseling centers is insufficiently detailed. The authors should clarify the number of eligible couples initially assessed, refusal rates, attrition rates, and whether any participants dropped out during the intervention or follow-up stages.

The inclusion criterion requiring a score above 190 on the Marital Conflicts Questionnaire is potentially problematic because the manuscript later classifies scores above 190 as “very severe conflict.” The authors should explain why only couples with severe conflict levels were included and discuss how this restriction may limit generalizability to couples with mild or moderate marital conflict.

The reliability coefficient reported for the Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire in the current study was .66, which is relatively low for a psychological measure intended for inferential analyses. The authors should discuss the implications of this reliability level for measurement precision and internal consistency, particularly because reliability values below .70 may weaken confidence in the observed intervention effects.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.