

Comparison of the Effectiveness of Compassion-Focused Therapy and Domestic Violence-Focused Couple Therapy on Marital Burnout and Emotion Regulation in Women Affected by Domestic Violence in Dezful

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E d i t o r

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R e v i e w e r s

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The inclusion criterion stating that participants had “experienced domestic violence within the previous six months or more recently” is conceptually and linguistically ambiguous. The authors should revise this to a clearly bounded criterion, such as “at least one episode of domestic violence during the preceding six months,” and explain why the six-month threshold was selected. A rationale is particularly important because women exposed to recent violence may differ substantially from those with chronic or historical victimization in safety status, symptom severity, marital burnout, and emotion regulation.

The domestic violence-focused couple therapy protocol requires much stronger safety clarification. The statement that “the continuation of conjoint therapeutic work was contingent on adequate attention to safety” is too general for a high-risk population. The authors should specify the screening criteria used to determine eligibility for couple treatment, including whether severe coercive control, stalking, sexual violence, threats with weapons, strangulation history, severe fear, or high lethality risk resulted in exclusion. Without this information, it is impossible to determine whether conjoint treatment was clinically and ethically appropriate.

The manuscript should clarify who actually participated in the “domestic violence-focused couple therapy” condition. The participants are described throughout as 15 women, yet couple therapy by definition generally involves both partners. The authors should state explicitly whether husbands or intimate partners attended all sessions, selected sessions, or none of the sessions. If only the women participated, the intervention should not be labeled couple therapy without further explanation. If partners participated, the partner-related eligibility criteria, consent process, demographic information, and attendance data should be reported.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the participant eligibility description, the use of “a score above the predefined cutoff of 60 on the Marital Burnout Measure” and “a score below the cutoff of 35 on the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire” needs stronger justification. The manuscript should provide empirical or validation-based evidence supporting these thresholds in the target population. Of particular concern is the use of 35 as a “cutoff” for the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, because the original Gross and John instrument is generally interpreted through its two subscales rather than through a diagnostic total-score threshold. The authors should clarify whether this cutoff was validated in the Persian version or created specifically for this study.

The manuscript’s treatment of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire warrants major revision. In the “Data Collection Tools” section, the sentence “an overall score can also be obtained by summing the responses across all items” should be reconsidered because the Gross and John questionnaire was developed to assess two theoretically distinct strategies, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, which do not necessarily represent opposite ends of a single continuum. A higher summed total may therefore not unambiguously indicate “better emotion regulation.” The authors should either analyze the two subscales separately or provide a strong psychometric justification for using a global score in this sample.

In the description of the Marital Burnout Measure, the manuscript states that “a score above 60 was considered indicative of a relatively high level of marital burnout.” The authors should verify that this threshold is supported by the cited validation literature and explain whether the cutoff applies to the exact version and scoring method used. In addition, because the study used the measure both as an eligibility criterion and as an outcome variable, the authors should acknowledge the possibility of restricted range and regression to the mean, which may inflate apparent pretest–posttest improvement.

The ethical description is incomplete for a study involving women exposed to domestic violence. The sentence “Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process” should be supplemented with the name of the approving institutional ethics committee, the formal ethics approval code, and the date of approval. More importantly, the manuscript should explain the safety protocol for participants at risk of ongoing violence, including procedures for imminent danger, referral to emergency or social services, private communication with participants, management of confidentiality when partners were involved, and criteria for discontinuing conjoint treatment.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.