Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

The Effectiveness of Spirituality Therapy Training on Distress Tolerance, Cognitive Flexibility, and Marital Stress in Conflicted Couples

Protocol summary

Study aim

Determining the Effectiveness of Spirituality Therapy Training on Distress Tolerance, Cognitive Flexibility, and Marital Stress in Conflicted Couples

Design

This study is a randomized, double-blind, parallel-group clinical trial conducted in phase II on 30 couples (15 couples in each group). Sample allocation is performed using simple randomization with the RAND function in Excel software; first, each couple receives an identification code and, based on the generated random numbers, is assigned to two groups of 15 couples.

Settings and conduct

This study will be conducted in counseling centers in Ahvaz on couples with marital conflicts. After obtaining informed consent, the couples will be randomly assigned by simple randomization into intervention and control groups. The intervention group will receive spirituality therapy, while the control group will receive routine services. Data will be collected at the pre-test and post-test stages. The study is double-blind, and the outcome assessors, clinical caregivers, and data analysts will not be aware of the group allocations.

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria: Age between 25 and 45 years old. Have at least 2 years of marital life. Have marital conflict. Have at least a high school diploma. Exclusion criteria: Having mental disorders and taking psychiatric medications. Having physical problems that interfere with the intervention process.

Intervention groups

Intervention group: Spiritual therapy training is implemented in eight 90-minute sessions based on the model of Saalabifard et al. (1401) and focuses on self-awareness, spiritual growth, emotion regulation, acceptance, prayer, and forgiveness, promoting mental peace and improving interpersonal relationships. Control group: receive no intervention.

Main outcome variables

Distress tolerance; Functional flexibility; Marital stress

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information

IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260627069978N1**
Registration date: **2026-07-07, 1405/04/16**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2026-07-07, 1405/04/16**
Update count: **0**

Registration date

2026-07-07, 1405/04/16

Registrant information

Name

Zeinab Shahriari

Name of organization / entity

Country

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Phone

+98 916 620 0632

Email address

zeynab.shahriari64@gmail.com

Recruitment status

Recruitment complete

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date

2026-08-06, 1405/05/15

Expected recruitment end date

2026-08-21, 1405/05/30

Actual recruitment start date

empty

Actual recruitment end date

empty

Trial completion date

empty

Scientific title
The Effectiveness of Spirituality Therapy Training on Distress Tolerance, Cognitive Flexibility, and Marital Stress in Conflicted Couples

Public title
The Effectiveness of Spirituality Therapy Training

Purpose
Education/Guidance

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:
Be between 25 and 45 years old. Have at least 2 years of marital life. Have marital conflict. Have at least a high school diploma. Be willing to cooperate and participate in couple therapy sessions.

Exclusion criteria:
Having mental disorders and taking psychiatric medications Having physical problems that interfere with the intervention process

Age
From **25 years** old to **45 years** old

Gender
Both

Phase
N/A

Groups that have been masked

- Care provider
- Outcome assessor
- Data analyser

Sample size
Target sample size: **60**
More than 1 sample in each individual
Number of samples in each individual: **2**
Each participant is in fact a couple consisting of one man and one woman.

Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized

Randomization description
In this study, a simple randomization method was used to assign participants to the experimental and control groups. The unit of randomization in this study was the couples visiting the counseling center. First, a complete list of eligible couples based on the study entry criteria was prepared. Then, a unique numeric identification code was assigned to each couple. These codes were entered into the Random Number Generator software, which generated a random number for each couple. After these numbers were generated, the couples were sorted in ascending order according to their random numbers. Then, the participants were sequentially assigned to two groups; the first 15 couples on the list were assigned to the experimental group, and the next 15 couples to the control group. By this method, the order of entry into the study and the researcher’s knowledge of the participants had no role in group selection. For allocation concealment, the person responsible for entering data into the software was independent of the clinical operations team and could not be aware of or alter the allocation process. Additionally, the identification codes were kept confidential and separate from other participant information. Therefore, it was not possible to predict the group assignment for any couple before the completion of the randomization process.

Blinding (investigator's opinion)
Double blinded

Blinding description
In this study, to blind the outcome assessors who are responsible for collecting and scoring the questionnaires, they are unaware of the couples' allocation to the experimental or control group. The clinical caregiver and the person responsible for data analysis are also blinded to the group allocation. Data are recorded and analyzed using numerical identification codes, and information about the grouping of participants is not made available to the data analyst. In this way, an attempt has been made to minimize the possibility of bias in the outcome assessment process and statistical analysis.

Placebo
Not used

Assignment
Parallel

Other design features

Secondary Ids

empty

Ethics committees

1

Ethics committee

Name of ethics committee
Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz

Street address
Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz, Farhang Shahr

City
Ahvaz

Province
Khouzestan

Postal code
6134937333

Approval date
2026-06-23, 1405/04/02

Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1405.337

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Marital conflicts between couples

ICD-10 code
Z63.0

ICD-10 code description
Problems in relationship with spouse or partner

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Distress tolerance
Timepoint
before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention
Method of measurement
Simmons and Gahr Distress Tolerance Questionnaire (2005)

2

Description
Functional flexibility
Timepoint
before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention
Method of measurement
Connor and Davidson Functional Flexibility Questionnaire (2003)

3

Description
Marital stress
Timepoint
before performing the intervention and two weeks after completion of the intervention
Method of measurement
Marital Stress Questionnaire (Erth Gomer et al., 2000)

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description
Intervention group: The spiritual therapy intervention consists of eight 90-minute sessions designed to enhance the higher dimensions of human beings and strengthen the individual's connection with God or a higher power. In the first session, group members get acquainted with one another, and a warm and trusting atmosphere is created. In this session, the concepts of spiritual therapy, its role in life, and the difference between spirituality and religion are presented, along with the importance of belief and acceptance. The second session is dedicated to increasing self-awareness, which includes recognizing and regulating one's own and others' emotions using guided imagery methods, identifying needs, and planning for the present and future. Spiritual freedom, acceptance of God, and human responsibility in life are also discussed. The third session focuses on listening to the inner voice. Participants engage in practices such as meditation, daily writing, and deep breathing to rediscover the meaning and spiritual values within themselves, and trust in intuition and inner guidance is examined. In the fourth session, confession of sins and attention to injustices done to oneself and others in the presence of God are considered, and the method of spiritual dialogue and prayer with God or a higher power is explained. The fifth session is devoted to kindness and performing spiritual acts individually and collectively to increase self-esteem and a sense of usefulness. Also, delegating matters to God, cleansing negative thoughts, coping with anxiety, and strengthening willpower are among other topics discussed in this session. In the sixth session, a pleasant connection with sacred entities is strengthened to reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety, and the concept of love for self and others along with acceptance of suffering in life is presented. In the seventh session, forgiveness of self and others is the focus; feelings of guilt and resentment decrease, and the benefits of forgiveness for improving mental and spiritual health are taught. The eighth session addresses death and fear of it, which through strengthening spiritual beliefs, reliance on a higher power, and practicing gratitude helps reduce anxiety related to death. At the end, all the materials from previous sessions are summarized and reviewed to consolidate learning. This therapeutic program is designed based on the research of Saalebi Fard et al. (2022) and is delivered to the experimental group in eight 90-minute sessions.
Category
Behavior

2

Description
Control group: They do not receive any intervention or treatment.
Category
N/A

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
Hope Life Counseling Center
Full name of responsible person
Zeinab Shahriari
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Unit 2, 1st Floor, No. 36, Zamzam St., Between Hojjat and Ferdows Sts., Zeytoon Karmandi
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Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor

Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University

Full name of responsible person
Aslan Egdernezhad

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Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz, Farhang Shahr.

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Grant name

Grant code / Reference number

Is the source of funding the same sponsor organization/entity?
Yes

Title of funding source
Islamic Azad University

Proportion provided by this source
100

Public or private sector
Private

Domestic or foreign origin
Domestic

Category of foreign source of funding
empty

Country of origin

Type of organization providing the funding
Academic

Person responsible for general inquiries

Contact

Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University

Full name of responsible person
Zeinab Shahriari

Position
Master's Student

Latest degree
Bachelor

Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology

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Person responsible for updating data

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Sharing plan

Deidentified Individual Participant Data Set (IPD)

No - There is not a plan to make this available

Justification/reason for indecision/not sharing IPD

Participant data is completely confidential and I do not intend to publish it.

Study Protocol

Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Statistical Analysis Plan

No - There is not a plan to make this available

Informed Consent Form

Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Clinical Study Report

Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Analytic Code

No - There is not a plan to make this available

Data Dictionary

No - There is not a plan to make this available