Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

The Effectiveness of Online Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Intimacy and Commitment Among Couples in Long-Distance Relationships

Protocol summary

Study aim

To evaluate the effectiveness of online emotionally focused couple therapy on intimacy and commitment among couples in long-distance relationships.

Design

This is an open label, parallel group study including 30 couples. Couples are allocated to two groups of 15 using block randomization with blocks of four and sequentially numbered opaque envelopes. Clinical trial phase is not applicable.

Settings and conduct

The study is conducted online via video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom or Google Meet). Eligible couples are recruited through social media calls and counseling centers. After completing the pretest, participants are randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. The intervention group receives eight weekly 90-minute counseling sessions. The posttest is conducted immediately after sessions, followed by a three-month follow-up. No blinding is performed in this study.

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Participants are married couples aged 18 to 50 years who are in a long-distance relationship due to educational migration or international remote work. Inclusion criteria include legal marriage, consent of both spouses, internet access, and the ability to attend online sessions. Exclusion criteria include substance dependence, severe mental disorders, severe intimate partner violence, suicide risk, formal divorce proceedings, and concurrent couple therapy.

Intervention groups

The intervention group includes 15 couples who receive eight 90 minute sessions of online emotionally focused couple therapy. The control group includes 15 couples who receive no intervention during the study.

Main outcome variables

Marital intimacy; marital commitment

General information

Reason for update

Acronym

IRCT registration information

IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260717070222N1**
Registration date: **2026-07-24, 1405/05/02**
Registration timing: **registered_while_recruiting**

Last update: **2026-07-24, 1405/05/02**
Update count: **0**

Registration date

2026-07-24, 1405/05/02

Registrant information

Name

maryam abad

Name of organization / entity

Country

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Phone

+98 61 3334 8420

Email address

1380meri@gmail.com

Recruitment status

recruiting

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date

2026-07-21, 1405/04/30

Expected recruitment end date

2027-01-20, 1405/10/30

Actual recruitment start date

empty

Actual recruitment end date

empty

Trial completion date

empty

Scientific title

The Effectiveness of Online Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Intimacy and Commitment Among Couples in Long-Distance Relationships

Public title
Online Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Couples' Intimacy and Commitment
Purpose
Education/Guidance
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria:
Age 18 to 50 years Officially married Having a long-distance relationship Consent from both spouses Internet access No severe mental disorder or addiction Completion of pretests
Exclusion criteria:
Presence of a severe psychiatric disorder Presence of suicide risk Presence of severe intimate partner violence Presence of active substance addiction Concurrent participation in couple therapy Being in formal divorce proceedings
Age
From **18 years** old to **50 years** old
Gender
Both

Phase
N/A
Groups that have been masked
No information
Sample size
Target sample size: **60**
Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized
Randomization description
Block randomization with a fixed block size of four will be used. An independent person will generate the allocation sequence using Random Allocation Software and place it in sequentially numbered, opaque, sealed envelopes. After confirming eligibility and enrolling each couple, the envelopes will be opened sequentially, and couples will be allocated to the intervention or control group.
Blinding (investigator's opinion)
Not blinded
Blinding description
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, Ahvaz Branch
Street address
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch، Farhangshahr، Golestan Highway
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
3733361349
Approval date
2026-06-23, 1405/04/02
Ethics committee reference number
IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1405.387

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Long distance marital relationships
ICD-10 code
Z63.0
ICD-10 code description
Problems in relationship with spouse or partner

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Marital intimacy score
Timepoint
At baseline, immediately after completion of the eight intervention sessions, and three months after completion of the intervention.
Method of measurement
Olia Marital Intimacy Questionnaire

2

Description
Marital commitment score
Timepoint
Measurement at baseline, immediately after completing the 8 intervention sessions, and 3 months after the intervention.
Method of measurement
Adams and Jones Marital Commitment Scale

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description
Intervention group: Fifteen eligible couples in long distance relationships who are randomly assigned to the control group and receive no couple therapy during the 8 week study period

Category
Behavior

2

Description
Control group: Fifteen eligible couples in long distance relationships are randomly assigned to the control group. They receive no couple therapy or related psychological intervention during the 8 week study period and complete assessments at baseline, immediately after the 8 week period, and 3 months later.
Category
Behavior

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Unit
Full name of responsible person
Pejman Taghipour Birgani
Street address
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch، Farhangshahr، Golestan Highway
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
3733361349
Phone
+98 61 3334 8420
Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor
Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University
Full name of responsible person
Pejman Taghipour Birgani
Street address
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch، Farhangshahr، Golestan Highway
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
00986133348420
Phone
+98 61 3334 8420
Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir
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
Public
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
عبداله مرادی
Position
Assistant Professor
Latest degree
Ph.D.
Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology
Street address
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch، Farhangshahr، Golestan Highway
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
3733361349
Phone
+98 61 3334 8420
Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Person responsible for scientific inquiries

Contact
Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University
Full name of responsible person
عبداله مرادی
Position
Assistant Professor
Latest degree
Ph.D.
Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology
Street address
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch، Farhangshahr، Golestan Highway
City

Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
3733361349
Phone
+98 61 3334 8420
Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Person responsible for updating data

Contact
Name of organization / entity
Islamic Azad University
Full name of responsible person
عبداله مرادی
Position
Assistant Professor
Latest degree
Ph.D.
Other areas of specialty/work
Psychology
Street address
Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch، Farhangshahr، Golestan Highway
City
Ahvaz
Province
Khouzestan
Postal code
3733361349
Phone
+98 61 3334 8420
Email
info@iauahvaz.ac.ir

Sharing plan

Deidentified Individual Participant Data Set (IPD)
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available
Study Protocol
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available
Statistical Analysis Plan
Not applicable
Informed Consent Form
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available
Clinical Study Report
Not applicable
Analytic Code
Not applicable
Data Dictionary
Not applicable