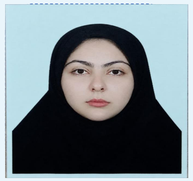
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Effectiveness of Short Term Object Relations Therapy on the Dimensions of Social and Emotional Competence in Married Women with Relationship Obsessive–Compulsive Symptoms

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Backgrounds

Relationship obsessive–compulsive disorder (ROCD), a specific subtype within the obsessive–compulsive spectrum, is marked by persistent doubts and excessive preoccupation with the quality, legitimacy, and stability of romantic relationships. Individuals with ROCD often become caught between their relationship's actual characteristics and their idealized expectations, leading them to repeatedly evaluate the authenticity of their feelings and the suitability of their partner . ROCD may be associated with impaired social–emotional competence, a construct referring to the ability to identify and regulate emotions, demonstrate empathy, and establish healthy interpersonal relationships

Methods

Participants were recruited through voluntary sampling. Following the acquisition of ethical approval from Islamic Azad University, Najafabad Branch, and public announcements, eligible volunteers were identified. After screening based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 35 eligible participants (considering potential attrition) were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (n = 17; receiving 14 sessions of 45-minute short-term object relations therapy) or the control group (n = 18).

Findings

Furthermore, the effect size estimates demonstrated that the intervention accounted for 55.1%, 27.2%, and 47.0% of the variance in changes in emotion regulation and management, expression and recognition of emotions, and understanding of emotions, respectively. These results provide evidence for the effectiveness of the intervention in improving social-emotional competence components among participants in the experimental group.

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Effect Size (η^2)
Emotion Regulation and Management	Time	1192.787	1.221	976.876	35.967	< .001	0.522
	Time × Group	1343.072	1.221	1099.958	40.499	< .001	0.551
	Error (Time)	1094.394	40.294	27.160	—	—	—
Expression and Recognition of Emotions	Time	148.135	2	74.068	10.870	< .001	0.248
	Time × Group	168.249	2	84.125	12.346	< .001	0.272
	Error (Time)	449.712	66	6.814	—	—	—
Understanding of Emotions	Time	500.669	2	250.334	26.655	< .001	0.447
	Time × Group	548.593	2	274.296	29.207	< .001	0.470
	Error (Time)	619.845	66	9.392	—	—	—

The descriptive findings indicated that participants in the experimental group demonstrated increased scores in all components of social-emotional competence following the intervention, whereas the control group showed minimal changes across the assessment phases.

Group	Phase	Emotion Regulation and Management (Mean ± SD)	Expression and Recognition of Emotions (Mean ± SD)	Understanding of Emotions (Mean ± SD)
Experimental	Pre-test	41.17 ± 13.34	33.52 ± 11.72	28.94 ± 9.69
	Post-test	55.70 ± 13.78	38.76 ± 11.40	38.11 ± 11.77
	Follow-up	56.11 ± 13.71	38.70 ± 12.32	38.70 ± 13.02
Control	Pre-test	41.94 ± 13.52	33.16 ± 10.83	29.38 ± 9.70
	Post-test	41.33 ± 14.37	33.05 ± 10.56	29.11 ± 9.88
	Follow-up	41.66 ± 14.13	32.94 ± 10.66	29.22 ± 9.41

These findings suggest that the intervention not only produced significant improvements in social-emotional competence but also demonstrated sustained effects during the follow-up period.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that short-term object relations therapy is an effective approach for improving emotion regulation among married women experiencing relationship obsessive–compulsive symptoms. However, achieving broader improvements in social-emotional competence, particularly in more cognitive and skill-based domains, may require complementary interventions, such as emotional skills training, mentalization-based approaches, and communication skills enhancement.

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