

Comparing the Efficacy of Transactional Analysis-Based Group Counseling and Psychodrama on Social Self-Empowerment among Children of Divorce

Nasrin. Asadi Khezerlou¹, Amir. Panah Ali^{1*}, Shahram. Vahedi², Naeimeh. Moheb³

¹ Department of Psychology and Counseling, Ta.C., Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran

² Department of Educational Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

³ Department of Clinical Psychology, Ta.C., Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: Panahali@iau.ac.ir

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Manijeh Daneshpour Department of Couple and Family therapy, Alliant International University, California, United States of America mdaneshpour@alliant.edu	Reviewer 1: Ali Akbar Soleymanian Associate Professor of Counseling Department, Bojnord University, Iran. Email: Soleymanian@ub.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Mahdi Khanjani Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. Email: khanjani_m@atu.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Methods paragraph beginning “The present study was applied in purpose and employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control-group design,” the methodological classification should be made more precise. Because participants were randomly allocated to the three study conditions after purposive recruitment, the design has characteristics of a randomized controlled intervention study despite nonprobability sampling from the source population. The authors should clearly distinguish between the sampling procedure and the allocation procedure and justify why the study is classified as quasi-experimental rather than randomized experimental. This distinction is methodologically important because random assignment affects internal validity, whereas purposive recruitment primarily affects external validity and representativeness.

The participant-selection paragraph states that eligible students were identified “through school counseling records,” but the manuscript does not explain how parental divorce status, elapsed time since divorce, psychiatric history, or current psychological treatment were verified. Please specify whether these variables were determined through official records,

counselor reports, parent confirmation, structured screening interviews, or a combination of sources. In particular, the criterion “having no documented history of severe psychiatric disorder or psychotropic medication use” requires a reproducible screening procedure. Without an operational description of eligibility verification, the recruitment process cannot be adequately replicated.

The intervention protocol is detailed in content but insufficiently documented with respect to treatment fidelity. For example, the Transactional Analysis protocol includes “ego states,” “psychological games,” and “Integrated Adult,” while the psychodrama intervention includes “Role Reversal,” “Future Projection,” and “Empty Chair techniques,” but the manuscript does not state who delivered these interventions, what professional qualifications or training the facilitator possessed, whether the same therapist administered both interventions, or whether adherence checklists or supervision were used. These details are particularly important in a comparative psychotherapy study because differential therapist competence or allegiance could explain observed differences between treatments.

The authors should reconsider the claim of strict treatment equivalence based only on the statement that both interventions consisted of “nine 90-minute sessions delivered twice weekly.” Equal duration does not necessarily establish equivalent therapeutic dose. The psychodrama protocol appears to involve substantial enactment, group participation, and experiential exercises, whereas the Transactional Analysis protocol contains structured psychoeducation, conceptual analysis, and homework-based cognitive work. Please discuss possible differences in session intensity, participant engagement, homework burden, and therapist activity. Reporting attendance rates, homework completion, and intervention adherence would help determine whether differential exposure contributed to the greater effect observed for Transactional Analysis.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The sample-size paragraph reports that “GPower [was used] for analysis of covariance, assuming a statistical power of 0.80, a Type I error rate of 0.05, and an effect size of 0.40,” but this information is insufficient for reproducibility. The authors should report the exact GPower statistical test family, test type, numerator degrees of freedom, number of groups, number of covariates, and the specific effect-size metric used, for example Cohen’s f rather than the generic phrase “effect size.” It should also be clarified whether 0.40 was based on prior empirical studies, a pilot study, or a conventional assumption. Given the very small final sample of 12 participants per arm, transparent justification of power assumptions is particularly important.

The manuscript states that participants were “randomly assigned by lottery to three equal groups of 12 participants,” but insufficient information is provided about allocation concealment and implementation. Please clarify who generated the allocation sequence, who conducted the lottery, whether assignment occurred after baseline measurement, and whether the person responsible for recruitment could predict group allocation. Even in small behavioral trials, these procedural details are essential for evaluating selection bias. A simple participant flow description indicating assessed, eligible, enrolled, randomized, completed, and analyzed participants would also substantially improve reporting transparency.

In the Methods section, the authors state that “the control group received no intervention during the same period.” This passive control condition creates a potential confounding effect because the experimental groups received substantial therapist contact, group interaction, attention, expectancy, and peer support, whereas the control group received none of these nonspecific therapeutic components. The authors should acknowledge this limitation explicitly and avoid attributing the entire between-group difference solely to the specific theoretical mechanisms of Transactional Analysis or psychodrama. A future active-control condition involving general supportive counseling or neutral group activities would provide a stronger test of intervention-specific effects.

The description of the Social Competence Questionnaire requires conceptual clarification because the manuscript alternates between the terms “social competence,” “social empowerment,” and “social self-empowerment.” The sentence “Although the questionnaire may be scored according to these subdimensions, in the present study it was used as a single-factor measure

representing overall social self-empowerment” appears to redefine the construct measured by the original instrument. The authors should provide psychometric and theoretical justification for treating a Social Competence Questionnaire score as “social self-empowerment,” explain whether this terminology was used by the original developer, and maintain one construct label consistently throughout the title, abstract, Methods, Results, and Discussion.

The instrument paragraph reports that “factor analysis... explained approximately 67% of the variance,” but the description is too general to establish construct validity. Please specify the type of factor analysis performed in the original validation study, the number of retained factors, relevant factor loadings or fit indices if available, and whether evidence exists for the unidimensional scoring strategy adopted in the present study. If the original questionnaire was multidimensional, summing all 47 items into a single total score requires explicit psychometric support rather than simply stating that it “may be scored” as one factor.

The manuscript reports a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78 in the current sample of only 36 participants. Although this coefficient is acceptable in magnitude, reliability estimates from such a small sample can be unstable. The authors should specify whether alpha was calculated using pretest responses, posttest responses, or pooled observations, because reliability is sample- and occasion-specific. It would also be useful to report item scoring direction, possible score range, whether reverse-coded items exist, and how missing item responses were handled. These details are necessary for a complete description of the measurement procedure.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.