

Comparison of the Effectiveness of Gottman Couples Therapy and Emotion-Focused Therapy on Relational Covert Aggression in Couples with Emotional Divorce

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction states, “the divorce-to-marriage ratio rising from 15.4% in 2010 to 33% in 2018 (Asghari et al., 2023).” It would be beneficial to provide a more recent statistic or specify if divorce trends have continued to rise, remain stable, or decline in recent years.

The literature review does an excellent job comparing Gottman and Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), but it lacks a clear theoretical justification for why these two specific therapies were chosen. A brief explanation of why they were hypothesized to be effective for relational covert aggression would strengthen the rationale.

The study mentions, “no study has yet compared the effectiveness of these two therapeutic interventions on this variable.” However, it would be useful to reference the closest related studies and explain how this research fills a specific gap.

The criteria state, “no prior couples therapy (either individually or jointly) as self-reported.” Given the potential for underreporting or recall bias, how was this criterion verified? Did the researchers cross-check with clinical records?

While the article states that the scale has been validated in previous studies, it does not specify whether reliability and validity were reassessed for the current sample. Reporting Cronbach's alpha for this study's sample would strengthen the methodological section.

The follow-up results indicate that both therapies maintained their effectiveness. However, was there a decline in effectiveness over time? A discussion on whether the effect sizes weakened at follow-up would be beneficial.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The statement, "emotional divorce is estimated to occur at two to three times the rate of formal divorces (Amirian, 2018)," is significant. However, there is no clear explanation of how emotional divorce is operationalized in the study. Adding a definition or scale used to measure emotional divorce would clarify this.

The sentence, "relational covert aggression includes behaviors aimed at manipulating dyadic relationships (Coyne et al., 2019)," introduces the term but does not provide concrete examples. Providing examples such as "silent treatment, passive-aggressive behavior, or exclusion from decision-making" would enhance understanding.

The Gottman therapy group had 10 sessions, whereas the EFT group had 8 sessions. Did this discrepancy in session number impact effectiveness? Addressing this imbalance would clarify whether session length influenced outcomes.

The text states, "the assumption of sphericity for covert relational aggression was violated ($p = 0.001$); therefore, the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied." It would be helpful to explain why this correction was necessary for readers unfamiliar with repeated-measures ANOVA.

The post hoc Bonferroni test results indicate that "EFCT was more effective than GMCT in reducing relational covert aggression ($p < 0.001$).\" However, effect sizes (Cohen's d or partial η^2) should be included to quantify the magnitude of differences.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.