

Comparing the Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis Therapy on Psychosomatic Vulnerability in Conflicted Women Applying for Divorce

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Amrollahi Biuki, A., Lashgari, M., & Aghaei, H. (2026). Comparing the Effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis Therapy on Psychosomatic Vulnerability in Conflicted Women Applying for Divorce. *Iranian Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, 5(5), 1-11.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jndd.743>



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Purpose: The present study aimed to compare the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis Therapy on psychosomatic vulnerability in conflicted women applying for divorce.

Methods and Materials: This applied study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group and a three-month follow-up period. The statistical population consisted of conflicted women applying for divorce who were referred by family courts to counseling centers in Tehran. A total of 45 participants were selected using purposive sampling and randomly assigned into two experimental groups (Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis Therapy) and one control group (15 participants in each group). The experimental groups received eight 120-minute intervention sessions, while the control group received no intervention. Data were collected using the Symptom Checklist-25 (SCL-25). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS-26 through descriptive statistics, multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), repeated measures ANOVA, and Bonferroni post hoc tests.

Findings: The results of covariance analysis indicated that Transactional Analysis Therapy had a statistically significant effect on reducing psychosomatic vulnerability ($F = 10.21, p = 0.004, \eta^2 = 0.274$), whereas Emotion-Focused Therapy did not show a significant effect ($F = 1.59, p = 0.218$). Repeated measures analysis revealed a significant effect of time ($F = 7.27, p = 0.008, \eta^2 = 0.148$) and a significant interaction effect between time and group ($F = 4.59, p = 0.042, \eta^2 = 0.107$), while the main effect of group was not significant ($F = 0.62, p = 0.544$). Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that Transactional Analysis Therapy was significantly more effective than the control group at posttest ($p = 0.016$), whereas no significant difference was observed between Emotion-Focused Therapy and the control group ($p = 0.664$).

Conclusion: The findings suggest that Transactional Analysis Therapy is more effective than Emotion-Focused Therapy in reducing psychosomatic vulnerability among conflicted women applying for divorce, with sustained effects over time.

Keywords: Emotion-Focused Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Psychosomatic Vulnerability, Divorce, Interpersonal Conflict

1. Introduction

Divorce is widely recognized as one of the most stressful life events, often accompanied by profound psychological, emotional, and even physical consequences, particularly for women who experience relational conflict and instability prior to separation. In recent decades, the increasing rate of divorce across societies has drawn scholarly attention to the psychosocial vulnerabilities associated with marital dissolution, especially among women who are actively seeking divorce. These individuals are often exposed to chronic interpersonal stress, emotional dysregulation, and maladaptive coping patterns that may manifest not only in psychological distress but also in psychosomatic symptoms, reflecting the interconnected nature of mental and physical health (Piccinino, 2023; Seifi Ghazvloo et al., 2023). Psychosomatic vulnerability, as a multidimensional construct, refers to the tendency to experience physical symptoms that are influenced or exacerbated by psychological factors, including stress, anxiety, and unresolved emotional conflicts.

Women involved in marital conflict and divorce processes frequently report higher levels of depression, anxiety, interpersonal sensitivity, and somatic complaints compared to the general population. These symptoms are often intensified by relational instability, lack of emotional support, and unresolved attachment needs, which collectively contribute to reduced psychological well-being and impaired quality of life (Alavi, 2024; Andozi, 2023). Moreover, the transition period leading to divorce is typically characterized by heightened emotional turmoil, including feelings of rejection, anger, guilt, and helplessness, which may further exacerbate psychosomatic responses (Canbulat & Aladağ, 2023, 2024). From a clinical perspective, addressing these intertwined psychological and physical vulnerabilities requires therapeutic approaches that target both emotional processing and relational dynamics.

Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) has emerged as a highly effective intervention for addressing emotional dysregulation and relational distress. Rooted in experiential and attachment-based frameworks, EFT emphasizes the identification, expression, and transformation of maladaptive emotional experiences. This approach posits that emotional awareness and processing are central to psychological change, and that unresolved emotional experiences underlie many forms of distress, including psychosomatic symptoms (Jafari et al., 2023; Zahed et al., 2025). Empirical studies have demonstrated that EFT can

significantly improve psychological well-being, enhance emotional regulation, and reduce symptoms of distress among divorced and distressed women (Alavi, 2024; Zohrabniya et al., 2022). Furthermore, EFT has been shown to facilitate post-divorce adjustment and promote adaptive coping by helping individuals access primary emotions and restructure maladaptive emotional responses (Andozi, 2023).

In parallel, Transactional Analysis (TA), developed by Eric Berne, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding personality structure, communication patterns, and interpersonal dynamics through the analysis of ego states, life scripts, and psychological games. TA conceptualizes human behavior in terms of interactions between Parent, Adult, and Child ego states, and emphasizes the role of early life experiences in shaping maladaptive relational patterns (Kraczla, 2023; Vos & Van Rijn, 2024). This approach is particularly relevant for individuals experiencing marital conflict, as it provides tools for identifying dysfunctional communication styles and restructuring interpersonal interactions. Research has shown that TA interventions can effectively improve marital satisfaction, communication patterns, and emotional regulation, thereby reducing psychological distress (Javid et al., 2025; Zia Jahromi, 2023). Additionally, TA-based interventions have demonstrated efficacy in enhancing cognitive-emotional regulation strategies and reducing maladaptive beliefs in couples with relational difficulties (Naziryy et al., 2023).

The application of TA in therapeutic settings extends beyond marital satisfaction to broader psychological outcomes, including reduction of depressive symptoms and improvement of overall mental health. Studies have indicated that TA group therapy can lead to significant improvements in emotional functioning and self-awareness, which are critical for addressing psychosomatic vulnerability (Piccinino, 2023; Rita, 2023). Furthermore, comparative studies have suggested that TA may be particularly effective in modifying deep-seated cognitive and emotional patterns that contribute to relational dysfunction and psychological distress (F. Arab et al., 2025; M. R. Arab et al., 2025). This highlights the potential of TA as a viable intervention for women experiencing severe interpersonal conflict and emotional instability during the divorce process.

Despite the growing body of research on EFT and TA, there remains a need for comparative studies that evaluate their relative effectiveness in addressing psychosomatic

vulnerability among conflicted women applying for divorce. While EFT primarily targets emotional processing and attachment-related needs, TA focuses on cognitive-structural aspects of personality and communication, suggesting that these approaches may have differential effects on psychological and physical outcomes. Previous studies have compared these approaches in relation to variables such as marital dissatisfaction, emotional regulation, and distress tolerance, but limited attention has been given to their impact on psychosomatic vulnerability, particularly in high-risk populations such as divorce-seeking women (Jahedi Delivand et al., 2024; Jokar et al., 2025). Additionally, most existing studies have examined these interventions in isolation rather than within a comparative framework, limiting the ability to determine their relative efficacy.

Given the complex and multifaceted nature of psychosomatic vulnerability, it is essential to explore interventions that address both emotional and relational dimensions of distress. Emotion-Focused Therapy, with its emphasis on emotional awareness and transformation, may be particularly effective in reducing the emotional triggers of psychosomatic symptoms. In contrast, Transactional Analysis, with its focus on cognitive restructuring and interpersonal dynamics, may offer a more structured approach to modifying maladaptive patterns that contribute to psychosomatic distress. The integration of findings from previous research suggests that both approaches hold promise, but their comparative effectiveness remains unclear, particularly in culturally specific contexts and clinical populations (Ammari et al., 2023; Seifi Ghazvloo et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the importance of culturally sensitive interventions cannot be overlooked, as sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping marital dynamics, emotional expression, and coping mechanisms. In many contexts, women seeking divorce may face social stigma, limited support systems, and increased psychological pressure, all of which contribute to heightened vulnerability (Alavi, 2024; Naziryy et al., 2023). Therefore, identifying effective therapeutic approaches that can address these unique challenges is critical for improving mental health outcomes and facilitating adaptive adjustment.

In addition, recent advances in psychotherapy research emphasize the importance of evidence-based interventions that are both effective and adaptable to diverse populations. Comparative studies not only contribute to the refinement of therapeutic models but also provide practical guidance for

clinicians in selecting appropriate interventions based on client needs and presenting problems. By examining the relative effectiveness of EFT and TA, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on therapeutic interventions for psychosomatic vulnerability and to inform clinical practice in the context of marital conflict and divorce.

Overall, the literature indicates that both Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis have demonstrated effectiveness in improving psychological functioning and relational outcomes. However, the specific mechanisms through which these therapies influence psychosomatic vulnerability, and their relative effectiveness in this domain, remain underexplored. Addressing this gap is particularly important for developing targeted interventions that can alleviate both psychological and physical symptoms in vulnerable populations.

The aim of the present study was to compare the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis Therapy on psychosomatic vulnerability in conflicted women applying for divorce.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was applied in nature and employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest control group and a three-month follow-up period. The research design consisted of two experimental groups and one control group, with participants randomly assigned to the groups. Measurements were conducted at three stages, including pretest, posttest, and follow-up, while the intervention was implemented only for the experimental groups. The first experimental group received Emotion-Focused Therapy, the second experimental group received Transactional Analysis Therapy, and the control group remained on a waiting list without receiving any intervention during the study period.

The statistical population included all conflicted women applying for divorce in Tehran who had been referred by family courts to psychological counseling and psychotherapy clinics in District 5 between July 2024 and January 2025 (Gregorian calendar). Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria, including having at least a high school diploma, being an applicant for divorce, completing informed consent for participation in the treatment process, not receiving concurrent individual psychological counseling during the intervention period, and not having a diagnosed personality disorder or a history of

substance abuse. Exclusion criteria included obtaining a divorce during the intervention, absence from more than two therapy sessions, or unwillingness to continue participation in the study.

The sample size was determined using Cohen's (1981) table and effect size estimation procedures. Considering conventional values for type I error (0.05) and type II error (0.10), along with corresponding z-scores, and assuming a large effect size, the minimum required sample size was estimated at 10 participants per group. However, to account for possible attrition and in line with recommendations from similar studies, a total of 45 participants were selected and randomly assigned into three groups of 15 individuals each, including two experimental groups and one control group. Prior to the intervention, participants were informed about the research objectives, therapeutic procedures, and ethical considerations. After the intervention period, all participants completed the research questionnaires, and the follow-up assessment was conducted three months after the posttest phase.

2.2. Measures

Data were collected using the Symptom Checklist-25 (SCL-25), which was developed by Najarian and Davoudi (2001). This instrument consists of 25 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The SCL-25 is widely used as a measure of psychological distress and mental health status, assessing various dimensions of psychological symptomatology. Lower scores indicate better mental health, while higher scores reflect greater psychological disturbance and vulnerability. The questionnaire includes nine subscales: somatic complaints, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, psychoticism, and hostility. The validity of the instrument refers to its ability to accurately measure the intended psychological constructs, and prior studies have demonstrated that the SCL-25 has a strong and significant correlation with its original version (SCL-90), confirming its construct validity. Reliability, which reflects the consistency and precision of the measurement, has been assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Previous research reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97 for the scale, indicating excellent reliability. In the present study, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was also confirmed, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, demonstrating satisfactory reliability for the research context.

2.3. Interventions

The transactional analysis therapy protocol was implemented based on the classical framework proposed by Eric Berne (1958) and delivered to the first experimental group across eight sessions, each lasting 120 minutes and held twice weekly. The intervention began with participant orientation, introduction to the therapeutic structure, and administration of the pretest, followed by foundational training in structural analysis of ego states, including Parent, Adult, and Child, and their functional subdivisions. In subsequent sessions, participants were guided to identify ego states in themselves and others, recognize parental messages and inhibitory injunctions, and learn techniques to regulate internalized Parent influences. The protocol progressed to examining contamination of ego states and maladaptive communication patterns, with emphasis on complementary and crossed transactions in interpersonal relationships. Further sessions addressed the concept of strokes, including their types, barriers to giving and receiving strokes, and the development of self-stroking capacities, along with time structuring strategies. The Karpman drama triangle and life positions were introduced to help participants understand dysfunctional relational roles. Later sessions focused on psychological games such as "Yes, but," "Wooden leg," "If it weren't for you," and "Kick me," using role-play and behavioral analysis to enhance insight. The final session involved introduction to life scripts and their underlying dynamics, enabling participants to analyze personal narratives through transactional analysis concepts, followed by an integrative review of all therapeutic content presented throughout the intervention.

The emotion-focused therapy protocol was conducted based on the model developed by Sue Johnson (2007) and delivered to the second experimental group in eight weekly sessions, each lasting approximately two hours. The intervention commenced with orientation, explanation of therapeutic goals and structure, administration of the pretest, and establishment of group cohesion and motivation, alongside an introduction to experiential approaches and the theoretical foundations of emotion-focused therapy. In the following sessions, participants were trained in emotional coaching techniques, including recognizing, accessing, and regulating emotional experiences. The therapy then focused on identifying and exploring core emotional experiences, particularly distressing and maladaptive emotions, while emphasizing the distinction between emotional process and content. Participants were guided to recognize emotional

markers and construct new meanings from their affective experiences. Subsequent sessions emphasized differentiation and processing of secondary emotions, validation of emotional experiences, and intensification of emotional awareness. The intervention then progressed to identifying and deepening primary emotions, facilitating ownership of fundamental emotional experiences, and restructuring emotional responses. In later sessions, maladaptive interaction patterns and relational cycles were explored, with a focus on expressing attachment-related needs and emotions. The final session included administration of the posttest, comprehensive review of therapeutic concepts and techniques, collection of participant feedback, and formal closure of the intervention process.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. The analysis was performed at two levels: descriptive and inferential. At the descriptive level, frequency distributions, percentages, and descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics and research variables across the groups.

At the inferential level, statistical analyses were conducted in accordance with the measurement level of the variables and underlying assumptions, including normality of distribution, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of covariance matrices, and the sphericity assumption. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and repeated measures analysis of variance (RM-ANOVA) were employed to examine the effects of the interventions over time and between groups. Additionally, Bonferroni post hoc tests were used to identify specific group differences and to test the research hypotheses with greater precision.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of participants indicated that the three groups were comparable across all measured variables, with no statistically significant differences observed ($p > 0.05$). Regarding prior counseling experience, the majority of participants in the Emotion-Focused Therapy group (73.3%), Transactional Analysis group (60%), and control group (73.3%) reported no previous history of counseling, while smaller proportions had prior experience (26.7%, 40%, and 26.7%, respectively), with no significant difference among groups ($p = 0.661$). In terms of employment status, most participants were employed in all three groups (66.7% in the Emotion-Focused group, 60% in the Transactional Analysis group, and 73.3% in the control group), while the remainder were homemakers, again showing no significant group differences ($p = 0.741$). Educational level distribution was also similar across groups, with the majority holding associate or bachelor's degrees (60% in both experimental groups and 53.3% in the control group), followed by smaller proportions with diplomas and postgraduate education, with no significant differences detected ($p = 0.930$). Age distribution across categories (25–30, 31–35, and 36–40 years) was relatively balanced among the groups. The mean age of participants was 31.53 years ($SD = 7.11$) in the Emotion-Focused Therapy group, 35.53 years ($SD = 5.36$) in the Transactional Analysis group, and 34.47 years ($SD = 7.45$) in the control group, with no significant difference ($p = 0.250$). Similarly, the mean duration of marriage was 10.34 years ($SD = 3.87$), 10.93 years ($SD = 3.54$), and 10.61 years ($SD = 3.18$) in the respective groups, again indicating no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.29$). Overall, these findings suggest that the groups were homogeneous in terms of key demographic variables prior to the intervention.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Psychosomatic Vulnerability by Group and Time

Variable	Time	Emotion-Focused Therapy (Mean)	SD	Transactional Analysis (Mean)	SD	Control (Mean)	SD
Psychosomatic Vulnerability	Pretest	66.73	13.01	67.00	16.16	66.80	13.76
	Posttest	55.60	12.29	54.33	13.62	66.67	13.85
	Follow-up	55.80	12.24	54.47	13.72	66.53	13.82

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 indicate that the mean scores of psychosomatic vulnerability were relatively similar across the three groups at the pretest stage, suggesting initial homogeneity among participants. However, at the posttest stage, both the Emotion-Focused Therapy group ($M = 55.60$, $SD = 12.29$) and the Transactional Analysis group ($M = 54.33$, $SD = 13.62$) demonstrated a notable reduction in psychosomatic vulnerability compared to the control group ($M = 66.67$, $SD = 13.85$), which showed minimal change. This pattern remained stable at the follow-up stage, with the Emotion-Focused Therapy group ($M = 55.80$, $SD = 12.24$) and the Transactional Analysis group ($M = 54.47$, $SD = 13.72$) maintaining lower scores, while the control group ($M = 66.53$, $SD = 13.82$) exhibited no meaningful improvement. Overall, these findings suggest that both therapeutic interventions were associated with a reduction in psychosomatic vulnerability over time, whereas no such change was observed in the control group.

Prior to conducting the main inferential analyses, the statistical assumptions underlying multivariate analysis of

covariance and repeated measures analysis of variance were examined. The normality of data distribution was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test and inspection of skewness and kurtosis indices, indicating that the distribution of psychosomatic vulnerability scores did not significantly deviate from normality in any of the groups ($p > 0.05$). Homogeneity of variances across groups was evaluated using Levene’s test, which confirmed that the assumption of equal variances was met ($p > 0.05$). The homogeneity of covariance matrices was examined using Box’s M test, and the results indicated that this assumption was also satisfied ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, the sphericity assumption for repeated measures was tested using Mauchly’s test; where violations were observed, appropriate corrections such as Greenhouse–Geisser adjustments were applied to the degrees of freedom. Overall, the results of these tests confirmed that the data met the necessary statistical assumptions, allowing for the valid application of parametric inferential analyses.

Table 2

Results of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for the Effectiveness of Interventions on Psychosomatic Vulnerability

Variable	Source of Effect	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial Eta Squared
Psychosomatic Vulnerability	Emotion-Focused Therapy	7.83	1	7.83	1.59	0.218	0.056
	Transactional Analysis Therapy	45.19	1	45.19	10.21	0.004	0.274

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that, after controlling for pretest scores, Emotion-Focused Therapy did not have a statistically significant effect on psychosomatic vulnerability ($F = 1.59$, $p = 0.218$, $\eta^2 = 0.056$), suggesting a small effect size and limited impact. In contrast,

Transactional Analysis Therapy showed a statistically significant effect ($F = 10.21$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta^2 = 0.274$), indicating a moderate to large effect size and demonstrating greater effectiveness in reducing psychosomatic vulnerability among participants.

Table 3

Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA for Examining Stability of Intervention Effects

Variable	Source of Effect	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial Eta Squared
Psychosomatic Vulnerability	Group	44.28	2	22.14	0.62	0.544	0.029
	Time	49.08	1.11	44.34	7.27	0.008	0.148
	Time $\times$ Group	30.16	2.21	13.62	4.59	0.042	0.107

As shown in Table 3, the main effect of group was not statistically significant ($F = 0.62$, $p = 0.544$), indicating no overall differences between groups when time was not considered. However, the main effect of time was significant ($F = 7.27$, $p = 0.008$, $\eta^2 = 0.148$), suggesting that psychosomatic vulnerability changed significantly across

measurement points. Furthermore, the interaction effect of time and group was also significant ($F = 4.59$, $p = 0.042$, $\eta^2 = 0.107$), indicating that the pattern of change over time differed across the intervention groups, reflecting differential effectiveness of the treatments over time.

Table 4
Bonferroni Post Hoc Test for Between-Group Comparisons at Posttest

Variable	Group	Adjusted Mean	SE	Reference Group	Comparison Group	Mean Difference	p
Psychosomatic Vulnerability	Emotion-Focused Therapy	65.66	0.587	Emotion-Focused Therapy	Control	-1.03	0.664
	Transactional Analysis Therapy	66.25	0.587	Transactional Analysis	Control	-2.44	0.016
	Control	64.69	0.587	Emotion-Focused Therapy	Transactional Analysis	1.41	0.290

According to Table 4, the Bonferroni post hoc test results revealed that there was no significant difference between the Emotion-Focused Therapy group and the control group at posttest ($p = 0.664$). However, a significant difference was observed between the Transactional Analysis group and the

control group ($p = 0.016$), indicating that Transactional Analysis Therapy was more effective in reducing psychosomatic vulnerability compared to the control condition. Additionally, no significant difference was found between the two intervention groups ($p = 0.290$).

Table 5
Pairwise Comparisons Across Time Using Bonferroni Test

Variable	Group	Reference Time	Comparison Time	Mean Difference	p
Psychosomatic Vulnerability	Emotion-Focused Therapy	Pretest	Posttest	1.13	0.215
		Pretest	Follow-up	0.93	0.318
		Posttest	Follow-up	-0.20	0.424
	Transactional Analysis Therapy	Pretest	Posttest	2.67	0.022
		Pretest	Follow-up	2.53	0.034
		Posttest	Follow-up	-0.13	0.546
	Control	Pretest	Posttest	0.13	0.499
		Pretest	Follow-up	0.27	0.301
		Posttest	Follow-up	0.13	0.499

The results in Table 5 indicate that, within the Emotion-Focused Therapy group, no significant differences were observed across time points ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that the changes were not statistically significant. In contrast, the Transactional Analysis group showed significant reductions in psychosomatic vulnerability from pretest to posttest ($p = 0.022$) and from pretest to follow-up ($p = 0.034$), indicating sustained improvement over time. No significant difference was found between posttest and follow-up in this group, suggesting stability of treatment effects. In the control group, no significant changes were observed across any time comparisons ($p > 0.05$), indicating the absence of meaningful change without intervention.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide important insights into the comparative effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis Therapy on psychosomatic vulnerability among conflicted women

applying for divorce. The descriptive results indicated that both intervention groups experienced reductions in psychosomatic vulnerability from pretest to posttest, and these improvements were largely maintained at the three-month follow-up, whereas the control group showed no meaningful change across time. However, inferential analyses revealed a more nuanced pattern. The results of the covariance analysis demonstrated that Transactional Analysis Therapy had a statistically significant effect on reducing psychosomatic vulnerability, while the effect of Emotion-Focused Therapy did not reach statistical significance. Furthermore, repeated measures analysis indicated that although the main effect of group was not significant, the main effect of time and the interaction between time and group were significant, suggesting that changes over time differed depending on the type of intervention. Post hoc comparisons further clarified that Transactional Analysis Therapy produced significantly greater improvements compared to the control group, whereas Emotion-Focused Therapy did not differ

significantly from the control condition at posttest. Pairwise comparisons across time also showed that only the Transactional Analysis group exhibited significant improvements from pretest to posttest and follow-up, with stability of effects over time, while no significant changes were observed in the Emotion-Focused Therapy and control groups.

These findings suggest that Transactional Analysis Therapy was more effective than Emotion-Focused Therapy in reducing psychosomatic vulnerability in this population. One possible explanation for this result lies in the structural and cognitive-behavioral orientation of Transactional Analysis, which directly targets maladaptive interpersonal patterns, cognitive distortions, and dysfunctional communication styles that are highly prevalent among women experiencing marital conflict and seeking divorce. According to the theoretical framework of Transactional Analysis, individuals' psychological difficulties are rooted in early life scripts, maladaptive ego state functioning, and repetitive interpersonal transactions that reinforce distress (Kraczla, 2023; Vos & Van Rijn, 2024). By helping participants identify and restructure these patterns, Transactional Analysis may have facilitated deeper cognitive and behavioral changes that translated into reductions in psychosomatic symptoms. This interpretation is consistent with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of Transactional Analysis in improving emotional regulation, communication patterns, and psychological well-being in individuals with relational difficulties (Javid et al., 2025; Zia Jahromi, 2023).

Moreover, the significant improvements observed in the Transactional Analysis group align with findings from studies comparing this approach with other therapeutic modalities. For instance, research has shown that Transactional Analysis can significantly enhance cognitive emotion regulation strategies and reduce maladaptive beliefs in couples with marital dissatisfaction (Naziryy et al., 2023). Similarly, comparative studies have reported that Transactional Analysis is effective in reducing marital apathy and increasing distress tolerance, suggesting its broad applicability in addressing relational and emotional challenges (F. Arab et al., 2025; M. R. Arab et al., 2025). These outcomes support the notion that Transactional Analysis may be particularly well-suited for individuals experiencing chronic interpersonal stress, as it provides concrete tools for understanding and modifying relational dynamics. In the context of psychosomatic vulnerability, such improvements in interpersonal functioning and

cognitive restructuring may reduce the psychological stressors that contribute to somatic symptoms, thereby explaining the observed effectiveness of this intervention.

In contrast, although Emotion-Focused Therapy led to reductions in psychosomatic vulnerability at the descriptive level, these changes were not statistically significant. This finding may initially appear inconsistent with the substantial body of literature supporting the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy in improving emotional well-being and reducing psychological distress. However, several factors may account for this discrepancy. Emotion-Focused Therapy primarily emphasizes emotional awareness, processing, and transformation, which may require longer intervention periods or more intensive engagement to produce measurable changes in psychosomatic outcomes. While EFT has been shown to significantly improve psychological well-being and quality of life in divorced women (Alavi, 2024), and to facilitate post-divorce adjustment (Andozi, 2023), its effects on psychosomatic symptoms may be more indirect and gradual.

Additionally, the effectiveness of Emotion-Focused Therapy may depend on participants' readiness to engage with and process deep emotional experiences. Women in highly conflicted marital situations may initially exhibit resistance to emotional exploration due to heightened distress, defensive coping mechanisms, or lack of emotional safety. As a result, the therapeutic impact of EFT may not fully manifest within the timeframe of the present study. Nevertheless, previous studies have demonstrated that EFT can improve emotional regulation, reduce fear of intimacy, and enhance adaptive coping in divorced women, suggesting that its benefits may emerge more clearly over extended follow-up periods (Jafari et al., 2023; Zohrabniya et al., 2022). Furthermore, group-based EFT interventions have been shown to produce significant improvements in emotional functioning and adjustment among divorced women, particularly when delivered over longer durations (Canbulat & Aladağ, 2023, 2024).

The significant interaction between time and group observed in the repeated measures analysis further supports the differential effectiveness of the two interventions. This finding indicates that the pattern of change in psychosomatic vulnerability varied across groups, with Transactional Analysis producing more pronounced and sustained improvements over time. This temporal dynamic highlights the importance of considering not only the immediate effects of interventions but also their stability and durability. The sustained improvements observed in the Transactional

Analysis group suggest that this approach may facilitate lasting changes in cognitive and behavioral patterns, which continue to influence psychological and physical well-being beyond the intervention period.

Another important aspect of the findings is the lack of significant change in the control group, which underscores the necessity of targeted psychological interventions for addressing psychosomatic vulnerability in this population. Women seeking divorce often face multiple stressors, including emotional conflict, social stigma, and uncertainty about the future, which can exacerbate psychological distress and somatic symptoms (Piccinino, 2023; Seifi Ghazvloo et al., 2023). Without appropriate intervention, these challenges may persist or worsen over time, highlighting the critical role of therapeutic support in promoting mental health and well-being.

The findings of the present study also contribute to the broader literature on couple therapy and psychological interventions for women experiencing marital difficulties. For example, research has shown that couple therapy can effectively reduce depressive symptoms and improve sexual functioning in women affected by relational problems (Ammari et al., 2023). Similarly, studies have demonstrated that interventions targeting emotional and relational processes can enhance psychological adjustment and reduce distress in divorced women (Seifi Ghazvloo et al., 2023). The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that Transactional Analysis, in particular, may be effective in reducing psychosomatic vulnerability, thereby addressing both psychological and physical aspects of distress.

Furthermore, the results align with recent research emphasizing the importance of integrative and comparative approaches in psychotherapy. Comparative studies allow for a more nuanced understanding of the strengths and limitations of different therapeutic modalities, enabling clinicians to tailor interventions to the specific needs of their clients. In this regard, the present study highlights the potential advantages of Transactional Analysis for individuals experiencing high levels of interpersonal conflict and psychosomatic distress, while also acknowledging the value of Emotion-Focused Therapy in addressing emotional processes.

It is also worth noting that the cultural context of the study may have influenced the findings. In many societies, including those where divorce carries social stigma, women may experience additional pressures that affect their psychological functioning and responsiveness to therapy. Transactional Analysis, with its structured and cognitively

oriented framework, may be more accessible or acceptable to individuals in such contexts, as it provides clear concepts and practical strategies for change. In contrast, the experiential and emotionally intensive nature of EFT may require greater cultural adaptation to maximize its effectiveness.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that while both Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis have potential benefits, Transactional Analysis appears to be more effective in reducing psychosomatic vulnerability among conflicted women applying for divorce within the timeframe of this study. These results underscore the importance of selecting appropriate therapeutic approaches based on the specific characteristics and needs of the target population, as well as the desired outcomes of intervention.

One limitation of the present study is the relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings and reduce the statistical power to detect significant effects, particularly for the Emotion-Focused Therapy group. Another limitation is the reliance on self-report measures, which may be subject to response biases such as social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment. Additionally, the duration of the intervention and follow-up period may not have been sufficient to capture the full effects of Emotion-Focused Therapy, which may require longer-term engagement to produce significant changes. The study was also conducted within a specific cultural and geographical context, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other populations.

Future research should consider using larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of findings and to examine potential moderating variables such as age, duration of marriage, and severity of marital conflict. Longitudinal studies with extended follow-up periods are needed to assess the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of both Emotion-Focused Therapy and Transactional Analysis. Additionally, future studies could explore the integration of these two approaches to determine whether a combined intervention might produce synergistic effects on psychosomatic vulnerability and related outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that clinicians working with women experiencing marital conflict and seeking divorce should consider incorporating Transactional Analysis techniques into their therapeutic interventions, particularly when addressing psychosomatic symptoms and interpersonal difficulties. Training programs for therapists may benefit from including

both Transactional Analysis and Emotion-Focused Therapy approaches to enhance their ability to address the complex needs of this population. Furthermore, counseling centers and mental health services should prioritize the development and implementation of evidence-based interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by women in the process of divorce.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all individuals for participating and cooperating us in this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the study and participated in the research with informed consent.

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