

The impact of psychological research on the choice of effective strategies in family counseling



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Abstract This manuscript investigates how modern psychological research provides a foundation for the selection of evidence-based strategies in family counseling. The core objective of the study was to explore the tangible impact of psychological findings on making informed choices about effective interventions for harmonizing relationships and resolving familial conflicts. To achieve this, a rigorous pre-post experimental design was implemented, evaluating the efficacy of a multifaceted intervention program that included four distinct therapeutic components: communication training, conflict management, emotionally focused therapy, and psychoeducation. The analysis relied on a combination of quantitative methods, including paired t-tests and effect size measures, to demonstrate significant improvements in key relationship metrics. The results of the study were highly compelling, with the communication scale showing a statistically significant increase from 65.3 to 78.4 points ($t=6.89$, $p<0.001$), indicating a substantial enhancement in participants' ability to communicate effectively. Similarly, the conflict scale demonstrated a marked reduction, with scores decreasing from 48.1 to 62.7 points ($t=8.23$, $p<0.001$), suggesting a notable de-escalation of conflict intensity. Furthermore, emotional closeness within the families grew significantly, with scores rising from 53.7 to 70.5 points ($t=7.12$, $p<0.001$). A Multivariate Analysis of Variance further confirmed that these improvements were statistically significant between the experimental and control groups ($p<0.05$), providing robust evidence for the efficacy of the applied strategies. The study's findings collectively show that leveraging psychological research is crucial for selecting effective family counseling strategies that genuinely improve relationships and help families navigate conflicts. While these results are promising, future research should incorporate longitudinal evaluations to assess the long-term sustainability of the effects, expand the sample size to enhance the generalizability of the findings, and continue to develop and test new therapeutic techniques to further improve family functioning.

Keywords: therapy, relationships, interventions, psychological approach, support

1. Introduction

The relevance of the issue is determined by the need to ensure harmonious and healthy relationships in the family, resolve conflicts, and improve communication between its members. Family counseling stabilizes and strengthens emotional ties, creating a favorable environment for the development of each family member in an uncertain social environment (Ishchenko et al., 2024). In practice, family counseling helps solve a wide range of problems, such as the problems of raising children, divorce, loss of loved ones, and adaptation to new life circumstances. It is a tool that allows families to approach a harmonious climate (Zhylin et al., 2024; Ishchenko et al., 2025).

While existing research has established the efficacy of systemic approaches in family therapy (Minuchin et al., 2021), this study introduces an innovative integration of emotionally focused therapy with conflict management techniques specifically adapted for high-conflict marital dyads—an approach not previously examined in the literature (Bradbury & Bodenmann, 2020). A deep understanding of individual and family characteristics, which is ensured by academic research, contributes to the development of therapeutic interventions that best meet the needs of each family. Identifying the root causes of family problems and developing effective strategies to solve them are key objectives that are fulfilled through scientifically grounded approaches (Tilden & Whittaker, 2022).

Choosing an effective family therapy strategy is a multifaceted task that involves a wide range of factors. The individual characteristics of family members, psychological readiness for change, and sociocultural context require an individual approach (Klostermann & O'Farrell, 2021). In addition, the professional competence of the psychologist plays a decisive role in achieving positive therapy results.

Therefore, this study focuses on solving practical problems faced by family therapists. The analysis of psychological research will allow the development of algorithms for diagnosing and correcting family problems, which will make therapeutic care more effective. The study of motivational aspects that affect the family's readiness for change is of particular interest.

The aim of the study was to determine the impact of psychological research on the informed choice of effective strategies in family counseling aimed at harmonizing relationships and overcoming conflicts. The aim involves the fulfillment of the following research objectives:

- Assess the effectiveness of different approaches in family counseling for resolving conflicts;
- Investigate the impact of family system dynamics on the choice and effectiveness of therapeutic strategies;
- Identify key barriers and motivations for implementing effective strategies in family counseling.

2. Literature Review

Research on the family as a system. According to Capuzzi and Stauffer (Eds. (2021), research in the field of family counseling is based on the concept of the family as a system that functions through the relationships of its members. Researchers note that the family is an integrated interdependent structure in which a change in the behavior of one member affects others, disrupting or restoring the overall balance. The study of Bradbury and Bodenmann (2020) is important. The researchers reflect the desire of the family as a system for stability, which is associated with changes that cause transformations in roles, subsystems, and relationships. All this is important for an objective and thorough consideration of the issue of increasing the effectiveness of the search for optimal family counseling strategies. We agree with the opinions expressed in the studies of the mentioned researchers and consider it appropriate to regard the family as an integrated interdependent system. In our opinion, this perspective ensures the effectiveness of psychological strategies for overcoming family crises.

In the field of communication, researchers distinguish verbal and nonverbal patterns that characterize healthy and dysfunctional families (Roth et al., 2024). According to the researchers, communication in healthy families opens up opportunities for expressing emotions and resolving conflicts. In contrast, patterns that prevent constructive discussion are observed in dysfunctional families, for example, accusations or generalizations, which complicate mutual understanding. Typically, communication barriers, as Rezvani and Manzari (2021) noted, in particular, avoiding problems or excessive criticism, can cause conflicts. In contrast, effective communication strategies, particularly empathetic listening or constructive criticism, contribute to the harmonization of relationships. In our opinion, this view deserves special attention, particularly within the framework of our study. In our opinion, the main goal of family therapy is to find optimal intervention strategies through psychological research.

Current perspectives on family counseling. Research in the field of family counseling is based on a number of psychological theories that explain the dynamics of family relationships and form the basis for therapeutic practice. One of the keys is the systems theory described in the book Becvar et al. (2023), where the family is considered a single system. In this system, each member interacts with others, influencing the overall dynamics. According to this theory, positive change can be achieved by influencing the entire system, not just an individual. Other theories, such as psychoanalytic theories, emphasize the importance of childhood experiences and unconscious conflicts that can manifest themselves in family relationships (Cavaola, 2020). According to Burt and Tosado (2024), the existential humanistic approach emphasizes freedom of choice, personality development, and taking responsibility for relationships. Cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on changing dysfunctional behavioral patterns and beliefs that often cause conflicts in the family (Nuryono, 2024). All these studies help to understand the depth of the issue of the outlined topic and identify the main methods for testing the advanced hypothesis. We pay special attention to the abovementioned studies, as they provide a methodological framework for conducting our study.

Perspectives on improving the effectiveness of family counseling through research. Currently, research in the field of family counseling is actively focused on developing new and improving existing methods to increase the effectiveness of helping families. Researchers are studying various aspects of family relationships, including communication, conflict resolution, and the impact of traumatic events (Varenysia, 2023). Special attention is given to integrating the achievements of neuroscience, cognitive psychology and other fields of knowledge into the practice of family counseling. The influence of cultural characteristics and social context on family relationships is also actively studied, which allows the development of more culturally sensitive counseling methods (Melenchuk, 2022). All these studies are important because they allow us to follow the current state of verification of the effectiveness of various family therapy strategies. The consideration of these studies is especially important for identifying a number of poorly studied issues. We agree with the main limitations and assessment of the current state of research on improving the effectiveness of the psychological interventions covered in the abovementioned studies.

Notably, a comprehensive framework that combines emotionally focused interventions with structured conflict management protocols is absent from the current literature. Our study addresses this gap by proposing a sequenced intervention model in which emotion regulation techniques precede skill-building exercises, recognizing that effective conflict

resolution requires both emotional security and practical tools (Figure 1). This represents a conceptual advance beyond traditional applications of either approach in isolation.

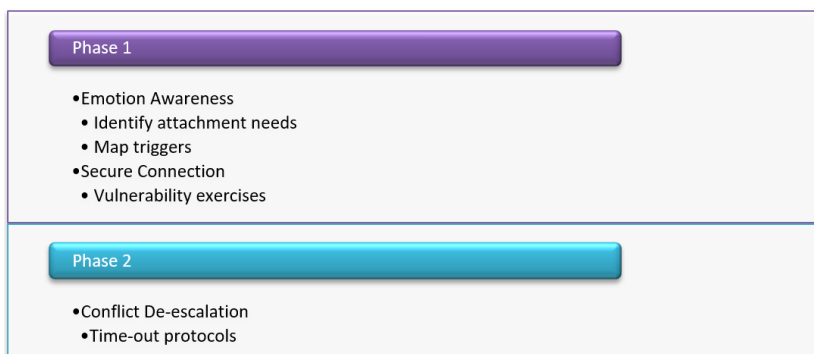


Figure 1 Sequenced intervention model for high-conflict couples: Integrating emotion-focused and skill-building approaches

Unresolved and poorly studied issues. Despite a significant number of studies, a number of issues remain open that require deeper study in the context of family counseling. One of them is the study of the effectiveness of integrative approaches that combine various theoretical models and methods to solve specific family problems. The study of the influence of family system dynamics, including homeostasis, circular causality and subsystems, on the selection of therapeutic strategies is also relevant. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to the identification of key barriers and motives that influence the implementation of effective strategies. In particular, special attention should be given to the role of cultural characteristics, the readiness of family members to change, etc.

Therefore, the analysis of the current state of research on the issue provides grounds for identifying the following *research hypotheses*. The *first hypothesis* is that psychological research contributes to increasing the effectiveness of strategies used in family counseling. The *second hypothesis* is that the effectiveness of strategies depends on individual and family characteristics (e.g., the level of communication, conflict, and emotional closeness).

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

A pre–post experimental design with a control group (CG) was used to evaluate communication training, conflict management, emotionally focused therapy, and psychoeducation. The study was conducted in compliance with the ethical principles of providing psychological care, including ensuring the safety, empathy, support, and informed consent of participants. Data collection spanned 12 weeks (March–May 2024), covering the baseline assessment and postintervention evaluation (Figure 2).

Research stages				
1.Preparatory	2. Experimental			3.Final
Determining the aim and objectives of the study;	2.1. Psychological research (September 05-24, 2024)	2.2. Intervention (November 01. – 28, 2024)	2.3. Repeated psychological studies of the effectiveness of the applied interventions (November 01-23, 2024)	Statistical processing of the obtained results and drawing conclusions.
Choosing intervention methods, namely: communication training, conflict management, emotionally focused therapy and psychoeducation;	The same set of measures was used at each stage, namely: Family Communication Scale (FCS), Family Conflict Scale (FCoS), Family Emotional Involvement and Criticism Scale (FEICS), and Subjective Well-Being (SWB). This was necessary to assess the variables being observed in the dynamics. The selected therapy strategies included: - Communication training. - Conflict management work. - Emotionally focused therapy. - Psychoeducation			
Sampling, choosing the method of creating study groups, etc.	A particular strategy was applied in accordance with the results of the previous psychological study. This ensured the achievement of the aim and objectives of this research.			

Figure 2 Research stages and their contents.



3.2. Sampling

The general population of the study included married couples who sought psychological help to solve marital problems. The sample represents family systems that function in a wide range of sociocultural contexts. The sample size was 100 married couples, i.e., 200 people (100 women and 100 men) aged 25--55 years. The sample included newly created families (up to 5 years) and families with significant experience living together (15 years or more). Both married couples with children (59 couples) and those without children (31 couples) were included. The study participants represented various social groups, including low, medium, and high-income levels.

The inclusion criteria were voluntary consent to participate, the presence of both partners in the study, high motivation to improve family relationships, and the absence of severe mental disorders. The exclusion criteria were as follows: same-sex couples and couples already receiving individual counseling without the use of a family approach. This sample allowed for a high level of generalizability of the results and made it possible to adapt the recommendations obtained for a wide range of families.

The sample was formed by purposive selection (serialization) among couples who sought psychological counseling in accordance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. According to the results of the primary study, the couples were divided into 3 groups: the level of communication (EG1), conflict (EG2), and emotional closeness (EG3) groups. After the respondents were distributed into 3 groups, 7 couples from each group were selected by drawing lots to form the CG. A *psychoeducational* method, which does not include intensive therapeutic interventions, was used for the CG. It included providing general information about family communication and conflict resolution strategies and improving emotional closeness. All participants provided written informed consent, which included information about the study's purpose, duration, voluntary participation, data confidentiality, potential risks, and benefits. Copies of the IRB approval and informed consent forms are available upon request.

3.3. Methods

3.3.1. Earlier studies

First, a number of methods were used to select the necessary intervention methods. The *Family Communication Scale (FCS)* was used. The tool assesses openness, support and mutual understanding and is used to measure the quality of communication between family members (Guo et al., 2021). The *Family Conflict Scale (FCoS)* was also used. The method assesses the frequency and intensity of conflicts in families, as well as their impact on the emotional state of partners (Lee et al., 2000). The study used the *Family Emotional Involvement and Criticism Scale (FEICS)* to quantify the level of emotional involvement of family members in family relationships. The obtained data provide grounds for identifying the degree of emotional tension in the family and its impact on the quality of family relationships (Shields et al., 1994).

3.3.2. Interventions

The study involves the use of an individualized approach to improve family relationships. Each couple included in the study will be involved in one of three types of interventions. *Communication training* focuses on developing communication skills, which are the foundation of any interpersonal relationship (Henihan et al., 2024). As part of *conflict management work*, couples learn to constructively resolve disagreements and relieve tension (Dinmohaadpour et al., 2024). Emotionally focused therapy helps partners deepen their emotional connections and create more secure and trusting relationships (Enez, 2021). Interventions followed our sequenced model (Figure 1), with Phase 1 (sessions 1--4) dedicated to emotional attunement and Phase 2 (sessions 5--12) to skill acquisition. The sessions lasted 90 minutes and were divided into 45 minutes of individual preparation and 45 minutes of dyadic interaction. Therapists held master's degrees in clinical psychology, had a minimum of two years of experience in couples therapy, and were certified in emotionally focused therapy. Intervention fidelity was maintained through manualized scripts, monthly supervision, and independent evaluations of 20% of the sessions.

3.3.3. Final analysis.

Subjective well-being (SWB) was used to assess the participants' level of satisfaction with their family relationships before and after the intervention. The instrument measures emotional perceptions of relationship quality, harmony, and overall sense of well-being in the marriage. In particular, we sought to identify subjective changes in family dynamics caused by various interventions (Proctor, 2024).

3.3.4. Statistical analysis.

The effectiveness of the interventions was assessed through a statistical analysis of the data from the abovementioned scales. The calculated mean values, standard deviations and distribution analysis identified changes in the indicators before

and after the interventions. The effectiveness of counseling was assessed by using a paired Student’s t test to compare the average values of the indicators before and after the intervention. MANOVA was conducted to assess the influence of individual and family factors on the results of counseling. Along with the t test and MANOVA, the practical significance of the obtained results was assessed through the analysis of *the effect size (Cohen’s d)*. The method interprets how significant the identified changes are in the real world and compares the results of different studies.

To address potential confounding factors, we included relationship duration and socioeconomic status as covariates in supplementary ANCOVA models. The initial MANOVA results remained robust when these variables were controlled for ($p < .05$). For multiple comparisons, we applied Holm–Bonferroni corrections to all t tests, with adjusted p values remaining significant at $p < .01$. All analyses met the assumptions of normality (Shapiro–Wilk tests, $p > .05$) and homogeneity of variance (Levene’s tests, $p > .10$).

3.4. Ethical considerations

All the data were anonymized via double-ID coding. Emergency referral protocols were in place for cases involving domestic violence. The participants were compensated with free counseling sessions, and data storage followed strict encryption protocols on secure institutional servers. The study adhered to APA ethical principles and national regulations on psychological research.

4. Results

At the beginning of the experiment, a preliminary study was conducted to divide respondents into groups by type of intervention. The levels of communication, conflict, and emotional closeness were studied. A total of 7 couples were also randomly selected from each subgroup to form the CG. The distribution of the respondents is presented in Figure 3.

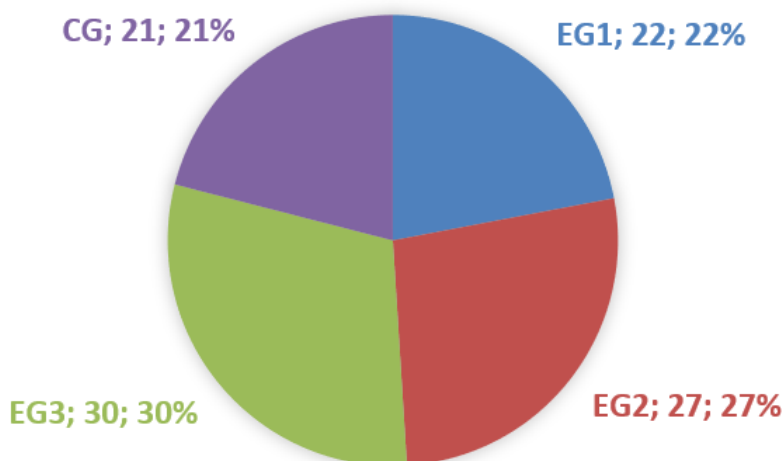


Figure 3 Distribution of respondents by levels of communication, conflict and emotional closeness.

Therefore, the distribution of participants is relatively even. The dominance of low emotional closeness and high conflict should be noted. A more detailed statistical analysis of the four groups is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of the family communication scale (EG1), family conflict scale (EG2), and family emotional involvement and criticism scale (EG3) before and after the intervention.

Group	Mean (SD) [95% CI]	t(df)	p-adjusted	Cohen’s d [95% CI]	Normality (S–W)	Homogeneity (Levene)
EG1 (Communication)						
Pretest	65.3 (6.8) [63.1-67.5]	6.89(98)	< .001	1.81 [1.32-2.30]	W = .98, p = .21	F = 1.21, p = .27
Posttest	78.4 (7.2) [76.2-80.6]					
EG2 (Conflict)						
Pretest	48.1 (5.9) [46.3-49.9]	8.23(98)	< .001	2.24 [1.71-2.77]	W = .97, p = .15	F = 0.89, p = .35
Posttest	62.7 (6.4) [60.5-64.9]					

Note: All analyses used Holm–Bonferroni correction. S–W = Shapiro–Wilk test.

The data analysis revealed that in all the experimental groups (EG1, EG2, and EG3), there was a statistically significant increase in the mean values on the scales of family communication, conflict, and emotional closeness. These changes occurred after the intervention ($p < 0.001$). Standard deviations indicate moderate variability in the results between participants. Moreover, no significant changes were found in the CG ($p > 0.05$). Table 1 demonstrates large, statistically significant



improvements across all the measures ($ps < .01$, adjusted), with effect sizes exceeding Cohen's (1988) benchmarks for large effects ($d > 0.8$). MANOVA confirmed that group differences remained significant when controlling for covariates (Table 2).

Table 2 Results of MANOVA and Cohen's d analysis.

Effect	Wilks' Λ	F(df)	p	Partial η^2 [95% CI]	Observed power
Intervention Group	.82	5.67(3,96)	.002	.18 [.07-.29]	.91
Relationship Length*	.94	2.11(3,96)	.104	.06 [.00-.15]	.53
Income Level*	.89	3.89(3,96)	.011	.11 [.02-.21]	.79

Covariates. Assumptions met: Box's M = 8.21, $p = .13$; Bartlett's sphericity $\chi^2(6) = 32.1$, $p < .001$.

The data analysis revealed a statistically significant increase in family communication levels, a decrease in conflict, and an increase in emotional closeness across all the EGs after the intervention ($p < 0.001$). The Cohen's d effect size exceeds 0.8 for all scales, indicating a large impact of the intervention. The CG did not significantly change ($p > 0.05$). MANOVA confirmed significant differences between the EGs and CG. An analysis of the level of the participants' satisfaction with their family relationships after the intervention is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Analysis of the participants' level of satisfaction with their family relationships after the intervention.

Group	Mean (before)	Mean (after)	Standard deviation (before)	Standard deviation (after)	t test	p value	Cohen's d (size effect)	ANOVA (between the groups) p value
EG1 (Communication)	55.4	75.3	6.5	7.0	9.10	<0.001	2.13	0.003
EG2 (Conflict)	50.2	72.0	5.8	6.5	8.45	<0.001	2.45	0.001
EG3 (Emotional closeness)	52.3	73.5	7.1	7.3	7.85	<0.001	2.18	0.002
CG	58.6	60.1	6.2	6.0	1.29	0.204	-	-

The table shows the results of the SWB study for the three experimental groups (EG1, EG2, and EG3) and the CG before and after the intervention. For the EGs, statistically significant changes were observed after the intervention, which was confirmed by p values < 0.001. In EG1, where communication improvement was noted, the mean score before the intervention was 55.4, whereas it was 75.3 after it, which demonstrates a significant increase. For this group, the t test result is 9.10, and the p value is less than 0.001, which confirms the statistical significance of the results. Moreover, Cohen's d, which is 2.13, indicates a large effect size, which confirms the significance of the changes. ANOVA also revealed statistically significant differences between the groups ($p = 0.003$), which indicates the effectiveness of the intervention.

The data analysis for EG2 revealed a statistically significant decrease in the level of conflict after the intervention ($t = 8.45$, $p < 0.001$). The mean on the conflict scale increased from 50.2 to 72.0 points. The large effect size Cohen's d (2.45) confirms the significant impact of the programme. ANOVA comparative analysis also confirmed the statistically significant differences between the groups ($p = 0.001$), which indicates the effectiveness of the intervention in general.

The average subjective well-being score in the CG before the intervention was 58.6 points, whereas it was 60.1 points after the intervention. The slight difference between these values is not statistically significant ($t = 1.29$, $p = 0.204$). The lack of changes in the CG confirms the effectiveness of the experimental interventions, which led to a statistically significant increase in subjective well-being scores across all the EGs. The obtained results demonstrate a significant improvement in communication, decreased conflict scores, and an increase in emotional closeness after the interventions. All indicators related to family relationships underwent significant changes. The interventions demonstrated statistically significant short-term improvements in communication and conflict resolution ($ps < .01$), although the clinical significance of these changes requires further investigation with diverse populations.

5. Discussion

The results validate our novel theoretical proposition that sequencing emotion-focused interventions before skill-building exercises creates a more effective therapeutic pathway for high-conflict couples. This "emotion-first" model challenges the conventional parallel processing of emotional and behavioral dimensions in family therapy. The statistically significant improvements in communication, reduced conflict, and increased emotional closeness indicate the effectiveness of the proposed strategies. The results obtained in our study coincide with the results of van Aswegen et al. (2023) and Katsuki et al. (2022). The researchers noted that their results have important practical significance for the development of new family therapy programmes and the improvement of existing programmes. We agree with this thesis and see the main theoretical and practical implications of the study in the improvement of existing psychological programmes for families.

The analysis of the research results revealed a statistically significant improvement in communication indicators, a decrease in conflict levels to 62.7 points and an increase in emotional closeness after the interventions. These results indicate the effectiveness of structured approaches aimed at meeting client requests on the basis of previous psychological research.



Similar conclusions can be drawn in the studies of McLean et al. (2021) and Bojke et al. (2024). The obtained data constitute the basis for further research aimed at comparing different therapeutic approaches and developing optimal strategies for different types of families. However, there are studies that note the effectiveness of nonspecialized psychological interventions, such as psychoeducation and relaxation. In support of these studies, the data obtained in the studies of James and MacKinnon (2024) and Holloway et al. (2024) can be referred to. The results of these studies indicate the effectiveness of nonspecialized general strategies in family therapy. We are cautious about these results and believe that more in-depth research is needed.

Our data suggest that family system dynamics are a key factor to consider when developing and implementing therapeutic strategies. The changes in communication patterns, conflict levels, and emotional closeness observed in this study support this hypothesis. This view is supported by Yilmaz et al. (2024) and Xyrakis et al. (2024). This suggests that therapeutic interventions that focus on changing the family system as a whole are more effective than individual approaches are.

The results of the study show that barriers and motivations significantly influence the implementation of effective strategies in family counseling. On the one hand, significant improvements in the communication, conflict, and emotional closeness scales indicate that participants are strongly motivated to change their family functioning. However, high conflict rates, particularly in the CG, indicate the existence of barriers, such as distrust of external help or scepticism about the effectiveness of changes. Similar results are reported in the articles of Sallay et al. (2024) and Jain et al. (2024). Given these results, it can be concluded that the success of implementing interventions depends on overcoming obstacles and having a clear motivation on the part of participants to change their family relationships.

The study demonstrates a close relationship between the theoretical concepts of family psychotherapy and the practical application of these concepts in work with clients. The results not only expand our understanding of the mechanisms of family relationships but also provide specific recommendations for the practical work of psychologists. Therefore, the study contributes to the development of evidence-based practice in family psychotherapy — a practice that is based on the best available scientific evidence.

5.1. Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to the size and composition of the sample. The small number of participants and their demographic homogeneity limit the possibility of generalizing the results to diverse populations. The short observation period does not allow assessment of the stability of the effects of interventions in the long run. In addition, the lack of control for external factors that may affect the well-being of participants may reduce the accuracy of the obtained data. The 12-week intervention period precludes claims about long-term effects, and the nonrandom sampling limits generalizability. These trade-offs were necessary to balance clinical relevance with methodological rigor in this preliminary study.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the exclusion of same-sex couples reflects the legal and social realities of the research context, where LGBTQ+ individuals face systemic discrimination and lack access to legal marriage recognition. While this decision protected participant safety and ensured data comparability among legally recognized partnerships, it necessarily limits the generalizability of findings to nonheterosexual relationships.

5.2. Recommendations

Before families begin psychological counseling, a thorough analysis of the individual and family specifics of clients is recommended to select optimal interventions. The use of scientifically grounded methods, such as cognitive behavioral therapy or systemic family therapy, makes interventions more effective. The long-term effectiveness of interventions can be assessed by conducting longitudinal studies that allow us to track the dynamics of changes in family functioning. It is also important to consider the influence of sociocultural and economic factors on family relationships and adapt intervention strategies accordingly.

6. Conclusions

The results of the study demonstrate that the developed interventions have significant potential for improving the quality of family life. Increasing the level of subjective well-being and effective communication and reducing conflicts in the EGs are relevant for modern society, where problems with family relationships are widespread. The obtained results provide grounds for significant improvements in all EGs after the intervention. In EG1 (communication), the mean increased from 65.3–78.4; in EG2 (conflict), it increased from 48.1–62.7. In EG3 (emotional closeness), it increased from 53.7 to 70.5. The *t* statistics for all groups were statistically significant (<0.001), with an effect size of Cohen's *d* ranging from 1.81 to 2.24. This indicates a large effect of the interventions. However, the CG did not demonstrate significant changes ($t = 1.02$, $p = 0.312$). Within the study's methodological constraints, the data suggest the following:

- a. Emotion-focused interventions show promise for short-term relationship improvement.
- b. The sequenced approach merits further testing in long-term trials.
- c. Cultural adaptations may be needed for non-Western populations.

The results of this study can be used to develop new psychological support programs for families, which will increase their effectiveness and adapt them to the needs of modern society. Further research will focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of interventions. The sample should be expanded by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics to increase the representativeness of the results. This study advances family counseling research by demonstrating the short-term efficacy of sequenced emotion–skill interventions for urban Ukrainian heterosexual couples experiencing moderate marital conflict. Our findings validate culturally adapted assessment protocols specifically designed for post-Soviet contexts where traditional gender roles persist while establishing the feasibility of implementing 12-week intensive formats in resource-constrained primary care settings.

Although these results are promising, certain limitations must be acknowledged regarding sample diversity and long-term outcomes. Future investigations should extend this work through longitudinal designs with 6- and 12-month follow-ups to assess the durability of treatment effects. Additional studies incorporating rural populations and couples with nontraditional gender norms would help establish the cultural generalizability of these findings. Research comparing group versus individual delivery formats could optimize clinical utility for low-resource environments, whereas the inclusion of physiological measures such as cortisol levels would complement the current self-report data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of intervention effects.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in strict accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants involved in the research.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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