

Design and Validation of a Counseling Model for Children of Divorce: An Expert-Based Qualitative Study in Iran

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Original Article

Abstract

Background and Aim: Despite the growing rate of divorce in Iran, there is a lack of localized, structured counseling models to address the psychological needs of adolescents from divorced families. While previous phenomenological studies in Iran have explored the lived experiences of adolescents after parental separation, this research goes a step further by designing and validating the first structured, expert-based counseling intervention specifically tailored for this target population. This study, therefore, shifts the focus from merely exploring experiences to a practical, validated solution.

Data and Method: This qualitative study utilized an exploratory-descriptive approach aimed at developing and validating a 14-session counseling model for children of divorce based on the experiential knowledge of Iranian experts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 family counseling experts in Yazd, selected through purposive criterion sampling. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, and the data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method.

Findings: Analysis of the experts' perspectives identified six primary therapeutic indices for the counseling model: 1) attitude toward parental divorce, 2) feelings about divorce, 3) emotional expression, 4) problem-solving skills, 5) parent-child relationship, and 6) peer interactions. The validation results confirmed the high content validity of the model, yielding a mean Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of 0.96 and a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.91 across all sessions. Statistical analyses further verified the internal validity and relevance of the model from the experts' perspective.

Conclusion: This study proposes a validated, 14-session counseling model for post-divorce adolescent care in Iran (ages 12–18). Distinct from prior descriptive research, this model offers an actionable and culturally attuned intervention addressing emotional regulation, parent-child dynamics, and social stigma-coping strategies for clinical practitioners and social policymakers to enhance the psychological well-being and resilience of this vulnerable population.

Keywords: Divorce counseling, Expert-based model, Validation, Qualitative study.

Key Message: This study presents the first structured, expert-based, and culturally grounded counseling model for adolescents from divorced families in Iran. It provides an actionable and validated framework for practitioners and policymakers to address psychological needs within the context of post-divorce familial changes.

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Introduction

Family, as a fundamental social institution, plays a pivotal role in shaping the psychological, emotional, and social well-being of individuals, particularly adolescents. The stability and functionality of families significantly influence the development of healthy interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills in children and adolescents (Damari et al., 2022). However, one of the most profound challenges that can disrupt family dynamics is divorce. Divorce, often described as the legal termination of a marriage, is not merely a single legal or relational event but a multifaceted process that unfolds over time, involving emotional, psychological, and social transitions (Azimi Rasta & Abedzade, 2013; Kalantari et al., 2011). This process typically includes progressive stages such as the contemplation of divorce, uncertainty about staying or leaving, making a difficult decision, separation or abandonment, and finally, formal legal actions (Jaberi et al., 2022).

The consequences of divorce extend far beyond the couple directly involved, profoundly affecting their children, especially adolescents. Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, during which individuals explore their identity, develop lifelong values, and prepare for future societal responsibilities (Askari-Nodoushan et al., 2019). Parental divorce during this sensitive phase can exacerbate adolescents' psychological challenges, leading to behavioral, academic, and psychological difficulties. For instance, empirical studies have shown that children of divorced parents are at higher risk of depression, anxiety, poor academic performance, and substance use (Amato, 2014; Roizblatt et al., 2018). Furthermore, the disruption of family structures and daily routines can lead to persistent feelings of instability, confusion, and a lack of emotional security, which may hinder adolescents' capacity to adapt to new life circumstances (Dowling & Barnes, 2020).

In Iran, despite cultural and religious conventions that generally discourage marital dissolution, recent decades have witnessed a notable rise in divorce rates (Khani, 2023; Banihashemi et al., 2023). Recent statistics indicate that Iran ranks fourth worldwide in divorce growth rates, with roughly 31.58% of marriages ending in divorce as of 2019 (Jaberi et al., 2022). This demographic trend underscores the pressing need for culturally attuned interventions to address the distinct issues faced by families experiencing divorce. This necessity is heightened within the specific sociocultural framework of Iranian families. In this context, conventional beliefs and religious principles that discourage divorce can generate considerable social stigma and psychological strain on individuals, which significantly

influences the post-separation parenting approaches and coping strategies available to teenagers.

While previous qualitative studies in Iran have provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of adolescents after parental divorce (Bastani *et al.*, 2022; Tabatabaei *et al.*, 2024), they have largely remained exploratory and descriptive. A critical gap remains in translating these phenomenological findings into a structured, practical, and validated counseling intervention. This study directly addresses this gap by moving beyond describing experiences to designing and validating the first replicable, expert-driven counseling model in this context, with a focus on creating an applicable tool for therapists and counselors. Although some international research has examined the emotional and psychological impacts of divorce on children (Zamani-Zarchi *et al.*, 2018), few domestic studies have focused on developing practical, evidence-based interventions tailored to the specific needs of adolescents in post-divorce contexts. This gap is particularly concerning given the unique socio-cultural context of Iranian families, where traditional values and structural expectations often shape parenting styles, family dynamics, and coping mechanisms (Askari-Nodoushan *et al.*, 2019).

Parental divorce disrupts family structure, routines, and interpersonal relationships, profoundly affecting adolescents' life trajectories. For instance, divorce often weakens parent-child relationships, severs connections with one parent, exposes adolescents to ongoing parental conflict, and brings sudden economic hardship (Emery *et al.*, 2011). These systemic challenges are compounded by adolescents' severe emotional turmoil, including anger, guilt, fear, and helplessness (Zamani-Zarchi *et al.*, 2018). Without appropriate institutional support and professional guidance, these negative emotions can persist and manifest as maladaptive behaviors, such as social withdrawal, aggression, or chronic academic underachievement (Roizblatt *et al.*, 2018, Dowling & Barnes, 2020).

Given the complexity of these interrelated issues, there is an urgent need for a structured, validated counseling model designed specifically for children of divorced parents. Such a model must address key operational areas, including emotional regulation, problem-solving skills, parent-child relationships, and peer interactions, all of which are crucial to helping adolescents navigate the complex challenges of post-divorce life. Counseling models tailored to adolescents' unique developmental needs can provide them with the psychological tools and behavioral strategies necessary to cope with their parents' divorce, adapt to new family dynamics, and build long-term resilience in the face of adversity (Hartman *et al.*, 2016; Özdemir, 2007).

Despite growing recognition of the importance of counseling interventions for children of divorced parents, empirical information remains limited on the design and validation of such models based on the experiential knowledge of experts, particularly in the Iranian context. This ongoing gap underscores the need for qualitative research that draws on the field insights of psychologists, counselors, and family specialists to develop a culturally relevant and effective counseling framework. By leveraging the expertise of professionals with firsthand experience working with divorced families, it is possible to create a model that not only addresses the immediate distress of adolescents but also equips them with the skills necessary for long-term adaptation and positive growth.

To this end, and considering the profound impact of parental divorce on adolescents alongside the lack of targeted counseling models in Iran, the present study aims to design and validate a comprehensive counseling model for children of divorced parents, grounded in the experiential knowledge of Iranian experts. Specifically, this research seeks to identify the core components of an effective intervention that addresses the unique psychological, social, and emotional needs of adolescents in post-divorce contexts. By focusing on critical operational areas—including children's attitudes toward divorce, emotional expression, problem-solving skills, parent-child relationships, and peer interactions—the study provides a structured framework for counselors and mental health professionals working with this vulnerable population. Ultimately, these findings contribute to the development of evidence-based, culturally attuned interventions that enhance the well-being and resilience of children of divorced parents, both in Iran and potentially in similar socio-cultural contexts.

Literature Review

Parental divorce is considered one of the most critical familial transitions that can influence adolescents' psychological adjustment, emotional regulation, and social functioning. Previous studies have demonstrated that the consequences of marital dissolution extend far beyond the structural separation of parents; they encompass fundamental alterations in family relationships, parenting patterns, emotional security, and adolescents' cognitive appraisals of both themselves and their immediate environment (Amato, 2014).

Developing effective counseling models for children and adolescents affected by parental divorce necessitates a comprehensive synthesis of theoretical perspectives and empirical precedents. Extant literature indicates that divorce should not be conceptualized merely as the termination of a marital relationship; rather, it represents a multidimensional transition

that significantly reconfigures emotional regulation, attachment dynamics, social relationships, and adolescent coping strategies (Amato, 2014; Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Relevant theoretical frameworks within this domain emphasize several critical explanatory mechanisms. Specifically, attachment theory posits that disruptions in familial structure and subsequent alterations in parent-child dynamics directly undermine adolescents' sense of security, emotional adjustment, and interpersonal relationships. Conversely, stable and supportive relationships with caregivers serve as primary buffers against the adverse effects of parental separation, thereby facilitating psychological resilience (Miljkovitch *et al.*, 2004).

Furthermore, resilience theory highlights that children of divorced parents are not inherently or inevitably vulnerable; rather, a constellation of protective factors—such as emotional awareness, problem-solving capacities, supportive peer networks, and constructive parent-child interactions—can foster adaptive outcomes. Empirical evidence corroborates that social support and healthy peer relationships stand out as pivotal predictors of post-divorce psychological adjustment (Jackson & Fife, 2018).

Concurrently, family systems theory conceptualizes the family unit as an interdependent system wherein substantial modifications in one subsystem inevitably affects all other members. Marital dissolution radically alters family roles, communication pathways, co-parenting responsibilities, and emotional transactions. Consequently, counseling interventions should consider not only individual psychological symptoms but also broader familial relationships and interaction patterns (Dowling & Barnes, 2020).

Finally, from a cognitive-behavioral perspective, an adolescent's subjective appraisal and cognitive interpretation of parental divorce has a significant effect on their post-separation adjustment. Maladaptive cognitive schemas—such as self-blame, internalized guilt, learned helplessness, and catastrophic future projections—frequently exacerbate psychological distress. Implementing cognitive restructuring alongside structured problem-solving approaches can effectively equip adolescents with adaptive coping mechanisms, thereby enhancing their emotional self-regulation (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Methods and Data

This research was qualitative and exploratory in nature, conducted using qualitative content analysis. The research population comprised family psychologists, counselors, and specialized caregivers related to the child and family field in Yazd in 2022. Purposive sampling was used to recruit key informants with specific expertise in post-divorce

psychological care. In alignment with qualitative methodology, sampling operations continued until theoretical saturation was achieved—the point at which additional interviews yielded no novel themes or conceptual insights.

The final sample consisted of 12 specialists. The inclusion criteria required participants to be over 30 years of age, possess a minimum of 5 years of active clinical or counseling experience, hold an advanced academic degree (Master's or PhD) in a relevant discipline, and exhibit a willingness to participate. This targeted emphasis guaranteed that the gathered data were deeply rooted in comprehensive, specialized clinical practice, which constituted the principal objective for developing the therapeutic model. Additionally, individuals who lacked the ability to adequately convey complex concepts during the interview process were excluded from the study. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in the current study.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 12)*

#	Education	Job / Professional Role	Age (Years)	Work Experience (Years)
1	PhD in Counseling	Consultant and faculty member at the university	42	10
2	PhD in Counseling	Child and adolescent counselor	38	10
3	Master's in Psychology	Social worker	36	5
4	Master's in Counseling	Consultant and faculty member at the university	40	6
5	PhD in Educational Sciences	Consultant and faculty member at the university	39	12
6	PhD in Psychology	Consultant and faculty member at the university	50	15
7	Master's in Counseling	Social worker	36	8
8	PhD in Psychology	Manager of Counseling Clinic	41	15
9	PhD in Psychology	Faculty member at the university	37	6
10	Master's in Educational Sciences	Faculty member at the university	34	7
11	Master's in Social Work	Social worker	46	18
12	Master's in Social Work	Consultant	42	10

In qualitative research, the primary data collection tool is frequently the researcher themselves. In this study, which utilized an exploratory approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. With the explicit aim of designing an intervention model that could encompass various comprehensive dimensions, the researcher, after designing open-ended questions regarding the multifaceted issues faced by children of divorce, approached the experts. The experts initially examined the lived experiences of 24 adolescent boys and girls who had experienced parental divorce and were living with one of their parents. These adolescents were aged between 12 and 18 years and were enrolled in the first or second stage of secondary education (Tabatabaei *et al.*, 2024). Following the presentation of these preliminary research findings by the experts, core questions such as "In your opinion, what physical, psychological, social, educational, cultural, and other relevant issues do children of divorce face?" were formally posed. Additionally, the experts were asked about the most critical factors contributing to the adaptation of children of divorce to their unique circumstances, as well as the optimal counseling model for them. Furthermore, they were requested to provide both micro-level (therapeutic) and macro-level (structural) solutions for each of these identified problems. After completing the interviews, the proposed solutions were systematically analyzed, categorized, and ultimately used to design an intervention model based on the obtained themes. To enhance research reproducibility, the full semi-structured interview protocol is provided in the Supplementary Materials.

It is worth noting that the primary researcher, while obtaining the necessary ethical codes for accessing participants, made every effort to conduct the research in accordance with ethical principles. This comprehensive process included obtaining informed consent from the experts to actively participate in the research process and ensuring the preservation of the dignity and self-esteem of the interviewees during the interviews. Necessary explanations regarding the research topic, objectives, significance, and specific research execution methods were also provided, along with obtaining formal permission for digital audio recording and asking questions without any presupposed bias. Moreover, participants were encouraged to express their professional views freely and openly. This study has also been officially registered with the ethics committee of the Islamic Azad University of Yazd under the specific ethics code IR.IAU.YAZD.REC.1402.057.

Findings

Considering the sensitivity of the topic in examining the behavior of children of divorce and the results based on the findings of the first phase of the research (Özdemir, 2007), this study focused on examining solutions and problem-solving paths for children of divorce from the

perspective of experts. In this regard, experts and specialists were asked to examine the themes and key components of counseling for children of divorce, drawing on their own understanding and life experiences with divorce processes and associated issues. Accordingly, the results from qualitative interview codes were analyzed, considering the cultural and indigenous context, to identify and investigate the challenges faced by children of divorce from the perspective of experts (Table 2).

Table 2. *Experts' Perspectives on Children's Experience of Divorce*

Core Codes	Selected Codes
Parenting system challenges	Ineffective parenting behaviors, parental incompetence
Relationship-centered challenges	Parent-child communication problems, parental emotional distance, weak parental bonding
Negative thoughts and emotions	Negative thoughts and perceptions, negative emotions
Experience of blame	Self-blame, parental blaming, peer blaming
Emotional responsiveness	Parental unsupportive reactions to child's emotions, parental negative reactions to child's emotions
Forgiveness and neglect	Physical neglect and forgiveness, emotional neglect and forgiveness, educational and economic forgiveness and neglect
Appropriate pattern	Guardian role, emotional resource role, effective and friendly relationship, responsibility and supervision, mentoring and guidance

In the subsequent stage, the research focus shifted to designing and constructing a counseling model. The therapeutic intervention model and counseling pattern were designed and validated through several distinct steps grounded in the practical life and professional experience of the participating experts, including: (1) reviewing the theoretical foundations of the main program, (2) reviewing various existing intervention models, (3) examining the explicit objectives and thematic content of the program, (4) conducting a structured needs assessment alongside interviews with the target group, and (5) designing the final content of the program. The content of this validated model is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Model of Divorce Children Counseling Sessions Along with Content Validity of Sessions (Designed for 14 Weekly Sessions, 90 Minutes Each)*

Indexes	Sessions	Objectives	CVR	CVI
<i>Attitude toward parental divorce</i>				
	1st	Creating a tranquil and secure space for adolescents, establishing a specific framework for future sessions.	1.00	1.00
	2nd	Assisting children of divorce in understanding and identifying their own and others' feelings, familiarizing children with the concept of emotions, explaining the concept of family, and increasing awareness and acceptance of divorce children regarding the uniqueness of some families.	1.00	1.00
<i>Feelings about parental divorce</i>				
	3rd	Helping children of divorce to better understand the concept of divorce, providing a safe and secure space for group members so they can share their feelings about their parents' divorce with others, helping children of divorce to identify common feelings and reactions towards their parents' divorce (reactions such as denial, fear of abandonment, guilt, and sadness).	1.00	0.92
<i>Expression of various emotions</i>				
	4th	Introducing group members to concepts related to social problem-solving, emphasizing that there are multiple methods for venting frustration.	0.83	0.92
	5th	Encouraging children of divorce to generate multiple solutions to a particular problem, helping children evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed solutions.	1.00	1.00
<i>Problem-solving skills and adaptation</i>				
	6th	Utilizing problem-solving skills to address personal issues and divorce-related problems.	1.00	1.00
	7th	Teaching children to understand the difference between problems they can solve and problems they cannot solve, helping children distinguish between wishes and beliefs, continuing to apply problem-solving skills to address divorce-related issues.	1.00	1.00
	8th	Strengthening and reinforcing social problem-solving skills in children of divorce, reviewing the concept of emotions, the consequences of each emotion, the concept of family, and divorce-related problems.	1.00	0.92

Table 3. (Continued)

Indexes	Sessions	Objectives	CVR	CVI
<i>Parent-child relationship</i>				
	9th	Increasing the ability of children of divorce to recognize and express their feelings towards their parents, further exploring the emotions and feelings of children of divorce regarding divorce, helping children of divorce to understand their thoughts and actions, assisting children in applying problem-solving skills to address divorce-related issues.	1.00	0.92
	10th	Enhancing the ability of children of divorce to recognize and express their feelings towards their parents, further exploring the emotions and feelings of children regarding divorce.	1.00	0.92
	11th	Examining the perceptions and feelings of children of divorce regarding problems they have with their parents, helping children understand the changes that have occurred in the family, applying problem-solving skills to address divorce-related issues.	0.83	1.00
	12th	Reviewing and reinforcing concepts related to divorce, further examining parent-child relationship problems, preparing children for the end of sessions.	1.00	1.00
<i>Relationship of children of divorce with friends</i>				
	13th	Boosting the self-esteem of children of divorce, increasing awareness among children of divorce about themselves and finding healthy friendships.	0.83	0.92
	14th	Emphasizing group support among members and making new friends, even after the session's end, to strengthen relationships among them, ending group sessions in a satisfactory manner.	1.00	1.00
Relative Content Validity (S-CVR_{Ave})			0.96	-
Content Validity Index (S-CVI_{Ave})			-	0.91

Note. CVR = Content Validity Ratio, CVI = Content Validity Index.

Through calculating the average total score across the triple evaluation criteria for each individual session, the overall Content Validity Ratio (S-CVR/Ave) for that session was successfully obtained. It should be noted that items with scores above 0.79 are deemed highly suitable; those between 0.70 and 0.79 require modification; and those below 0.70 are considered unacceptable and should be removed. To determine overall content validity across

the tool, the average content validity index was also used. This index represents the proportion of items whose content validity has been confirmed, meaning it accurately reflects the proportion of items in a clinical tool that received a favorable score of 3 or 4 from the panel of experts or specialists. The relative coefficients and the average content validity index for each individual session of the program and for the entire clinical program are presented in detail in Table 3.

Based on the findings in the table 3, the content validity ratio (CVR) and the average content validity index (CVI) for all sessions combined were 0.96 and 0.91, respectively. Three specific sessions (Session 4, Session 11, and Session 13) produced a CVR of 0.83. This value, although marginally lower than that of earlier sessions, comfortably exceeds the study's established psychometric criterion of 0.79 required for an item to be deemed 'appropriate'. Minor refinements were subsequently made to the textual phrasing of the objectives for these sessions based on qualitative comments from experts during the validation process to maximize operational clarity. Nonetheless, no significant structural or content modifications were considered essential, given the robust CVR and highly elevated CVI scores, which reached 0.92 and 1.00, respectively.

Since the obtained statistical coefficient is close to one, it clearly indicates an exceptionally high validity of the designed counseling model for children of divorce. This therapeutic model was structured into 14 sequential sessions, comprehensively addressing children's cognitive attitudes toward parental divorce, the expression of distinct emotions related to divorce (including various emotional feelings and behavioral expressions), the stabilization of the parent-child relationship (encompassing post-separation parenting styles and parental expectations), interpersonal relationships with peers and social networks, and ultimately proactive problem-solving and psychological adaptation, including targeted strategies for the long-term continuity and retention of learning regarding this critical issue.

The next step was to explain the operational content validation of the designed counseling model. The underlying theoretical foundations of the program were carefully examined, and since this therapeutic program is built upon strong theoretical foundations, it inherently possesses excellent construct validity. The researchers and panel experts involved in the initial design of the program firmly confirm its validity. The primary purpose of conducting the internal validation test of the model is to systematically reflect the professional opinions of experts and to iteratively revise and improve the framework. In this study, formal expert opinions were used for rigorous model validation. Initially, the formal validity of the proposed model, including the coherence and consistency of its components, overall model

perceptibility, ambiguity of expressions, and the presence of deficiencies in word meanings, was thoroughly examined and corrected based on the scholarly opinions of supervisors and consultants. This questionnaire directly measures the validity, practical applicability, internal coherence, comprehensiveness, conceptual perceptibility, clinical innovation, and acceptability of this model. Additionally, experts were asked to provide their corrective qualitative perspectives through open-ended questions to assess the qualitative content validity. The target population for the internal validation of the proposed model consisted of 12 multidisciplinary counseling experts, psychologists, educational scientists, and professional family counselors who were fully informed about the research topic and successfully completed the internal validity questionnaire (Table 4).

Table 4. *Validity of the Divorce Counseling Model Based on Experts' Opinions*

Internal Validity Components	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Model relevance to the study topic	3.44	0.57	11	10.43	0.001
Interrelationships among pattern concepts	3.07	0.55	11	7.44	0.001
Comprehensiveness and coherence	3.00	0.61	11	12.04	0.001
Clarity	3.20	0.77	11	11.32	0.001
Pattern innovation	3.30	0.87	11	4.94	0.001
Pattern acceptability	2.80	0.73	11	8.73	0.001

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *df* = Degrees of Freedom, *t* = t-value, *Sig.* = Significance level (p-value)

The results of the internal validity components of the divorce counseling model indicate that this model has been significantly validated and has achieved a high level of consensus among experts in this field. The divorce counseling model, based on the presented axes, can be categorized into six core indices: (1) attitude toward parental divorce, (2) feelings about parental divorce, (3) expression of various emotions, (4) problem-solving skills and adaptation, (5) parent-child relationship, and (6) relationship of children of divorce with friends.

As shown in the data from the Table 4, the results of the one-sample t-test indicate that the t-test for each individual research dimension is statistically significant and positive, confirming that the model is structurally valid. The results of the second research question demonstrated that the observed t-value at a 99% confidence level for all questions is highly significant. Therefore, the average value of respondents' responses to each question was

significantly higher than the hypothesized theoretical average score for each question. Therefore, according to the expert panel, all the above elements are, to a large extent, highly necessary and critical in counseling children of divorce. Finally, to examine the inter-rater reliability and consensus stability of the model's indices, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated. The resulting statistical coefficient was $\kappa = 0.63$, with a p-value less than 0.001. According to established psychometric guidelines for interpreting this specific coefficient, a value within the range of 0.61 to 0.80 indicates substantial agreement among raters. Therefore, this statistical result confirms a robust and acceptable level of reliability for the model's structural components, fully validating the consistency and alignment of the experts' clinical judgments.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research aimed to design and validate a counseling model for children of divorced parents based on the experiential knowledge of Iranian experts. The findings highlight the importance of addressing six key indices throughout the counseling process: (1) attitudes toward parental divorce, (2) emotional responses to divorce, (3) expression of various emotions, (4) problem-solving skills and adaptation, (5) parent-child relationships, and (6) peer interactions. Together, these core indices provide a comprehensive, structurally sound framework for professional counselors to support adolescents in navigating the multifaceted challenges of post-divorce life.

The validation process, which included detailed expert evaluations and statistical analyses, confirmed the model's exceptionally high content validity ($CVR = 0.96$, $CVI = 0.91$). This psychometric confirmation indicates that the model is not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable in real-world settings. For instance, the deliberate emphasis on problem-solving skills and emotional regulation aligns with recent empirical findings highlighting the importance of psychological resilience and social support in adolescents' adaptation to parental divorce (Zamani-Zarchi *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, previous studies have shown that fostering adaptive coping strategies can significantly mitigate the negative psychological impacts of marital dissolution, such as clinical anxiety, depression, and destructive behavioral issues (Kelly & Emery, 2003). By systematically incorporating these evidence-based strategies into the structural counseling model, this study provides a practical, functional tool for counselors to address the unique developmental needs of adolescents in post-divorce contexts.

While previous studies have extensively explored the lived experiences of adolescents after parental divorce (Tabatabaei *et al.*, 2024), this research goes a step further by providing a structured, operationally validated counseling model. Traditional counseling approaches often overlook critical areas such as emotional regulation, parent-child communication dynamics, and peer interactions, all of which are essential for long-term adolescent psychological adjustment (Miljkovitch *et al.*, 2004). The proposed model addresses these gaps by focusing on culturally sensitive interventions tailored to the unique sociocultural context of Iranian families. For example, the model emphasizes the role of family dynamics and cultural norms in shaping adolescents' cognitive perceptions of divorce, which is consistent with findings from cross-cultural studies (Shahhosseini *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, the model's focus on peer interactions highlights the importance of localized social support networks in adolescents' successful adaptation to parental divorce. Research shows that adolescents who maintain healthy, supportive friendships and continuous social connections are significantly better equipped to cope with the emotional turmoil caused by parental separation (Cook & Fletcher, 2012; Jackson & Fife, 2018). By addressing this dimension, the counseling model provides a holistic approach to supporting adolescents' psychological and social well-being. The model's significant contribution lies in its cultural specificity, which becomes readily apparent when compared to notable Western therapeutic models that primarily emphasize co-parenting arrangements and parental conflict resolution. Although several Western therapies focus on logistical arrangements and minimizing inter-parental conflict (Kelly & Emery, 2003; O'Hara *et al.*, 2024), our expert-driven strategy prioritizes the adolescent's internal emotional landscape and immediate social environment. The core emphasis on regulating emotions regarding the divorce (Damari *et al.*, 2022), navigating modified parent-child dynamics within a collectivist cultural context (Azimi Rasta & Abedzade, 2013), and managing peer relationships and potential social stigma (Kalantari *et al.*, 2011) directly addresses the unique challenges encountered by adolescents in Iran. This differs from frameworks that may prioritize individual coping abilities in isolation. Consequently, our framework functions not merely as a standard clinical protocol but as a culturally sensitive intervention aimed at addressing the distinct, complex interplay of emotional, familial, and social forces within the Iranian environment.

Despite the strengths of this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The counseling model was initially constructed based on a relatively small sample of experts ($n = 12$) drawn solely from the Yazd region. This geographic concentration creates a potential for expert homogeneity bias, as the gathered viewpoints may not fully reflect the broad professional and cultural diversity across Iran, particularly the insights of practitioners such

as school counselors who were excluded from the sample. Consequently, the generalizability and relevance of the model across diverse geographic and cultural settings inside Iran necessitate additional examination. Second, this study focused on the model's design and psychometric validation rather than its long-term practical implementation. As a result, important operational impediments to practicality and implementation were not examined. For example, therapists may require specialized training to ensure fidelity to the model's therapeutic approaches and session goals in order to successfully conduct the 14-session program. Furthermore, critical questions regarding institutional scalability, strategic resource allocation—such as the establishment of appropriate physical facilities and materials—and seamless integration into existing public mental health services remain to be thoroughly investigated. Finally, while the model demonstrates high content validity, its long-term clinical efficacy remains unmeasured. Subsequent research should encompass rigorous pilot testing and longitudinal studies, potentially employing mixed-methods approaches, to assess its true impact on teenagers' psychological and social adaptation over extended periods.

In conclusion, this study successfully designed and validated a counseling model for children of divorced parents based in the experiential knowledge of Iranian experts. The model, structured into 14 weekly sessions across six core indices, provides a clear, actionable roadmap for counselors to address adolescents' unique needs in post-divorce contexts. Key developmental components such as emotional regulation, cognitive problem-solving skills, and peer interactions, were identified as crucial for helping adolescents adapt to their new family dynamics. These findings underscore the importance of designing culturally sensitive interventions to support children of divorced parents. By integrating this validated model into their clinical practice, family counselors can enhance the psychological and social well-being of adolescents facing parental divorce. Future research should focus on implementing and evaluating the model in diverse settings to assess its long-term effectiveness, while exploring the model's broader applicability in other cultural contexts could provide valuable insights for global counseling practices.

Following the successful validation of this model, the next essential step is to empirically assess its efficacy through a systematic implementation roadmap. The subsequent phase should be a pilot study with a small cohort of adolescents aged 12 to 18 years who have experienced parental divorce, using a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design. This study will assess critical outcomes, including anxiety, depression, psychological resilience, and the overall quality of parent-child connections, utilizing validated psychometric scales before and after the 14-session intervention. To evaluate the sustainability of the model's effects, a long-term follow-up examination will be conducted at 3 and 6 months post-intervention. This

pilot study must also incorporate a qualitative component, such as exit interviews with both the participating teenagers and the therapists. This mixed-methods approach will yield both quantitative data and essential input regarding the model's practical feasibility, the clarity of session content, and any required operational modifications. Ultimately, this systematic, evidence-driven methodology will yield substantial, data-grounded insights into the model's practical effects, facilitating its continuous refinement and wider distribution across clinical and educational environments.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with Ethical Guidelines

All ethical considerations have been taken into account by the researchers in this research. The study received institutional approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Islamic Azad University of Yazd under the ethics code IR.IAU.YAZD.REC.1402.057.

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Authors' Contributions

FatemeSadat Tabatabaei and Kiumars Farahbakhsh performed all data analyses. FatemeSadat Tabatabaei and SeyedAlireza Afshani provided data analysis tools and technical support. MohammadHossein Fallah and SeyedAlireza Afshani developed the conceptual design of the study, participated in data analysis, and drafted the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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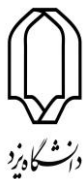
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طراحی و اعتباریابی الگوی مشاوره‌ای برای فرزندان طلاق: یک مطالعه کیفی مبتنی بر نظر خبرگان در ایران

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مقاله پژوهشی

چکیده

زمینه و هدف: با وجود نرخ رو به رشد طلاق در ایران، کمبود مدل‌های مشاوره‌ای بومی‌سازی‌شده و ساختاریافته برای پاسخگویی به نیازهای روان‌شناختی نوجوانان خانواده‌های طلاق مشهود است. اگرچه مطالعات پدیدارشناسی پیشین در ایران به واکاوی تجارب زیسته نوجوانان پس از جدایی والدین پرداخته‌اند، پژوهش حاضر با طراحی و اعتبارسنجی نخستین مداخله مشاوره‌ای ساختارمند و مبتنی بر نظر خبرگان، گامی فراتر نهاده و به‌طور خاص متناسب با این گروه هدف تدوین شده است.

روش و داده‌ها: این پژوهش کیفی با رویکرد اکتشافی-توصیفی و با هدف توسعه و اعتبارسنجی یک مدل مشاوره‌ای ۱۴ جلسه‌ای برای فرزندان طلاق، مبتنی بر دانش تجربی خبرگان ایرانی انجام شد. مصاحبه‌های نیمه‌ساختاریافته با ۱۲ نفر از متخصصان مشاوره خانواده در یزد که به روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند وابسته به معیار انتخاب شدند، صورت گرفت. فرایند گردآوری داده‌ها تا دستیابی به اشباع نظری ادامه یافت و داده‌ها با استفاده از روش کلاسیزی تحلیل شدند.

یافته‌ها: تحلیل دیدگاه‌های خبرگان، شش شاخص درمانی اصلی را برای مدل مشاوره شناسایی کرد: (۱) نگرش نسبت به طلاق والدین، (۲) احساسات در مورد طلاق، (۳) ابراز احساسات، (۴) مهارت‌های حل مسئله، (۵) رابطه والد-فرزند و (۶) تعاملات همسالان. نتایج اعتبارسنجی، اعتبار محتوایی بالای مدل را با میانگین CVR برابر با ۰٫۹۶ و CVI برابر با ۰٫۹۱ در تمام جلسات تأیید کرد. تحلیل‌های آماری نیز اعتبار درونی و ارتباط مدل را از دیدگاه خبرگان تأیید کرد.

بحث و نتیجه‌گیری: نتایج این مطالعه، یک مدل مشاوره‌ای ۱۴ جلسه‌ای اعتبارسنجی‌شده را برای مراقبت از نوجوانان پس از طلاق در ایران (سنین ۱۲ تا ۱۸ سال) پیشنهاد نموده است. این مدل برخلاف پژوهش‌های توصیفی پیشین، مداخله‌ای کاربردی و متناسب با بافت فرهنگی ایران را در زمینه تنظیم هیجانی، پویایی‌های رابطه والد-فرزند و راهبردهای مقابله با انگ اجتماعی به درمانگران بالینی و سیاست‌گذاران اجتماعی ارائه می‌دهد تا به‌زیستی روانی و تاب‌آوری این جمعیت آسیب‌پذیر را افزایش دهند. تحقیقات آینده برای ارزیابی اثربخشی بالینی آن در عمل مورد نیاز است.

واژگان کلیدی: مشاوره طلاق، الگوی مبتنی بر خبرگان، اعتباریابی، مطالعه کیفی.

پیام اصلی: این پژوهش نخستین الگوی مشاوره‌ای ساختارمند، مبتنی بر نظر خبرگان و ریشه‌دار در بافت فرهنگی ایران را برای نوجوانان خانواده‌های طلاق گرفته ارائه می‌کند. این مطالعه با عبور از پژوهش‌های صرفاً توصیفی، چارچوبی عملی و اعتباریابی‌شده در اختیار درمانگران و سیاست‌گذاران قرار می‌دهد تا به‌طور مؤثر به نیازهای روان‌شناختی در بستر تحولات خانوادگی پس از طلاق پاسخ دهند.

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