Designing a Model of Marital Infidelity Proneness Based on Domestic Violence and Marital Distress with the Mediating Role of Marital Burnout

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: *Original Article* **How to cite this article:** Shahrabadi, M., Khakpour, R., & Rezakhani, S. (2025). Designing a Model of Marital Infidelity Proneness Based on Domestic Violence and Marital Distress with the Mediating Role of Marital Burnout. *Applied Family Therapy Journal, 6*(6), 1-13. http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.4399 © 2025 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.	**Objective:** The present study aimed to design and test a structural model of marital infidelity proneness based on domestic violence and marital distress, with marital burnout serving as a mediating variable. **Methods and Materials:** This research employed a descriptive–correlational design using the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. The statistical population included married women residing in Shahriar County in 2024 who had at least five years of shared marital life. Using multi-stage cluster sampling, 240 participants were selected from local cultural centers and mosques. Data were collected using the Polat Marital Infidelity Proneness Questionnaire (2006), the Domestic Violence Against Women Questionnaire by Mohseni Tabrizi et al. (2012), and Pines's Marital Burnout Questionnaire (2004). Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and SEM with SPSS 29 and LISREL 8.8. **Findings:** Confirmatory factor analyses supported the construct validity of all study measures. Structural modeling results indicated that both domestic violence ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .05$) and marital distress ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted marital infidelity proneness. Marital burnout had a significant direct effect on infidelity proneness ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .05$) and mediated the relationship between both domestic violence and marital distress with infidelity proneness. Sobel test results confirmed the mediation of marital burnout in both models ($T = 2.54$ for domestic violence; $T = 2.74$ for marital distress), with variance accounted for (VAF) estimates of 0.274 and 0.279 respectively, indicating partial mediation. Model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.37$; RMSEA = 0.046; CFI = 0.90; NFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.87) confirmed a good model fit. **Conclusion:** Addressing violence, conflict, and burnout reduction strategies in couples' interventions may serve as effective preventive approaches to reduce infidelity tendencies and promote marital stability. *Keywords: marital infidelity proneness; domestic violence; marital distress; marital burnout; structural equation modeling*

1. Introduction

Marital infidelity is one of the most complex and destructive relational phenomena, with deep psychological, social, and cultural implications for individuals, couples, and society as a whole. Despite cultural and religious prohibitions, it continues to emerge as a significant factor in the destabilization of marriages and is associated with outcomes such as marital burnout, divorce, and negative psychosocial functioning (Sarmadi & Ahmadi, 2021). Research in different contexts shows that infidelity is not a single-dimensional construct but rather the result of interwoven psychological dispositions, relational vulnerabilities, socio-cultural dynamics, and even structural changes in societies (Paulinus, 2022). As such, a deeper understanding of its predictors and mechanisms is crucial for both theoretical advancement and the development of preventive interventions.

The conceptualization of infidelity has shifted in recent decades from viewing it as solely a moral failing toward recognizing its multifactorial underpinnings, including relational dissatisfaction, psychological traits, socio-emotional stressors, and contextual opportunities (Zomorodian & Akbari, 2021). For example, lived experiences of individuals involved in extramarital relationships highlight how unmet emotional needs, communication deficits, and marital conflicts create fertile ground for marital betrayal (Ghaem Mohammadi et al., 2023). At the same time, empirical studies underscore the interplay of attachment insecurity, sexual dissatisfaction, and low emotion regulation as antecedents that heighten the likelihood of infidelity (Abedi Naghandar et al., 2023; Sumbaga & Lapian, 2023).

A growing body of research emphasizes psychological determinants of infidelity, particularly focusing on personality characteristics, emotional dysregulation, and attachment-based vulnerabilities. For example, systematic reviews confirm a strong association between insecure attachment styles and the likelihood of engaging in infidelity, revealing that individuals with avoidant or anxious patterns are more prone to betray their partners as a maladaptive coping mechanism (Ghiasi et al., 2023). These findings align with studies showing that low emotional intelligence and narcissistic traits predict both attitudes toward and behaviors of infidelity (Ogwuche et al., 2024). In addition, personality-based frameworks highlight that dimensions of the Big Five, particularly high neuroticism and low conscientiousness, are closely tied to infidelity

proneness, especially when mediated by attachment and sexual dissatisfaction (Salehzadeh et al., 2024).

Beyond individual characteristics, relational factors remain central. Empirical evidence indicates that marital conflicts, when not resolved constructively, erode satisfaction and create vulnerability to extramarital affairs (Kaygas & Özbay, 2023). Relational resilience, defined as the ability of couples to recover from conflict, serves as a buffer, and its absence exacerbates the risk of infidelity. Similarly, chronic domestic violence and unresolved disputes are predictive of negative marital attitudes and significantly increase the likelihood of infidelity (Farivar, 2020; Ghalam Baz & Naghipour, 2023). Marital burnout, frigidity, and lack of intimacy have also been consistently identified as pathways leading to betrayal, with studies highlighting that emotional burnout and detachment often precede extramarital involvement (Darabi, 2021; Taziki et al., 2024).

Sexual factors are also of paramount importance. Sexual dissatisfaction has been consistently linked to extramarital behavior across cultures. For example, studies in Iran demonstrate that low sexual satisfaction, coupled with exposure to social media and entertainment that normalizes extramarital relations, significantly shapes attitudes toward infidelity (Nazari, 2024). Similarly, research in Indonesia highlights that individuals with higher marital satisfaction and grateful dispositions exhibit more negative attitudes toward infidelity, confirming the protective role of sexual and relational fulfillment (Nafisa & Ratnasari, 2022). Men, in particular, may display heightened vulnerability during midlife crisis, where intimacy deficits play a mediating role between psychological crises and tendencies toward betrayal (Taziki et al., 2024).

Cultural narratives and existential perspectives enrich this understanding by framing infidelity as not only an individual failure but also a symptom of broader social and relational contradictions. For example, existential analyses suggest that infidelity may represent a quest for meaning, freedom, or transcendence in the face of marital dissatisfaction (Chopani et al., 2021). Similarly, literary analyses, such as examinations of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, reveal how cultural constructions of sexuality and desire interact with personal discontent to create predispositions toward betrayal (Purwaningsih et al., 2020). In non-Western contexts, qualitative studies underscore how contextual, cultural, and structural conditions—such as community norms, economic pressures, and shifting values—serve as "revealing factors" in the emergence of infidelity (Nasiri et al., 2022).

The destructive consequences of infidelity are not confined to the dyad but extend to children, extended family, and the larger social fabric. Studies show that the damages range from emotional trauma and mental health deterioration to the destabilization of family structures and intergenerational dysfunction (Sarmadi & Ahmadi, 2021). The lived experiences of third parties, such as the individuals with whom affairs occur, also reveal profound psychological and social harms, including stigmatization, emotional manipulation, and identity crises (Najjar et al., 2024). These consequences further underscore the importance of both preventive and therapeutic interventions.

Recent clinical studies propose various therapeutic responses, ranging from acceptance and commitment-based therapy (Yousefpouri, 2024) to schema therapy (Pasha, 2024), both of which have been shown to effectively reshape attitudes toward infidelity, improve emotional regulation, and restore relational quality. These approaches reflect a paradigm shift from punitive or purely moralistic views toward evidence-based interventions that address underlying psychological and relational vulnerabilities. Similarly, interventions focusing on enhancing communication skills, sexual regulation, and emotional intimacy have been highlighted as protective mechanisms against marital betrayal (Abedi Naghandar et al., 2023; Fasehi Permehr, 2023).

At the same time, sociocultural studies show how myths of romantic love, jealousy, and unrealistic expectations shape relational dissatisfaction and infidelity tendencies. For instance, network analyses among Peruvian couples demonstrate that dissatisfaction and jealousy form strong clusters with infidelity in relational networks, reflecting the interdependence of these constructs (Ventura-León et al., 2025). In Iran, qualitative accounts similarly reveal that dissatisfaction and contextual stressors such as economic hardship and community norms foster extramarital involvement (Nasiri et al., 2022).

Moreover, cross-national comparisons highlight that infidelity must be situated within specific cultural frames. In Nigeria, for example, infidelity among couples has been tied to deficits in emotional intelligence and narcissistic tendencies, showing that psychological traits interact with cultural factors to shape betrayal (Ogwuche et al., 2024). In contrast, Western and Latin American studies point more toward myths of love and relational satisfaction as core determinants (Ventura-León et al., 2025). These findings underscore the importance of examining both universal and culture-specific predictors in order to develop comprehensive explanatory models.

Altogether, the literature emphasizes that infidelity is not a random event but rather the outcome of complex interactions among psychological, relational, and sociocultural variables. Communication deficits, unresolved conflicts, poor emotional regulation, insecure attachment, and sexual dissatisfaction emerge as key risk factors, while intimacy, gratitude, and resilience serve as protective mechanisms. At the same time, contextual and cultural conditions such as social media exposure, myths of love, and community norms frame the meanings and likelihood of betrayal (Nazari, 2024; Shakeri et al., 2019; Ventura-León et al., 2025).

The present study builds upon these multidimensional insights to examine a structural model of marital infidelity proneness based on domestic violence and marital distress, with the mediating role of marital burnout. This approach is consistent with prior research indicating that violence and unresolved conflicts not only directly increase the likelihood of betrayal but also contribute indirectly by fostering burnout and emotional detachment in marital relationships (Farivar, 2020; Ghalam Baz & Naghipour, 2023). By integrating individual, relational, and contextual predictors into a structural framework, this study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics underlying marital infidelity.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study employed a descriptive–correlational and predictive research design using structural equation modeling. The statistical population consisted of married women residing in Shahriar County who, in 2024, attended cultural centers and mosques in the county and had a minimum of five years of marital life. Sampling was conducted through a multi-stage cluster method; first, regions of the county were randomly selected, and then from among the neighborhoods, 240 married women were randomly chosen to complete the instruments measuring the study variables.

Inclusion criteria comprised being married, residing in Shahriar, willingness to participate, and having at least five years of shared marital life. Exclusion criteria included being unmarried, not residing in the county, failing to complete the questionnaires, or having particular physical or psychological conditions that prevented full participation.

This sampling method was selected because the statistical population was dispersed, and it allowed access to a broader sample with reduced cost and time.

2.2. Measures

The instruments used for data collection in this study included: first, the Marital Infidelity Proneness Questionnaire developed by Polat (2006), consisting of 30 items that assess positive and negative tendencies toward infidelity on a five-point Likert scale, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients reported between 0.77 and 0.88 in previous studies; second, the Domestic Violence Against Women Questionnaire by Mohseni Tabrizi et al. (2012), comprising 71 items on a five-point Likert scale that measures domestic violence with specified scoring, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.81 and 0.90; and third, the Marital Burnout Questionnaire by Pines (2004), including 20 items that assess three subscales of physical, emotional, and psychological fatigue on a seven-point Likert scale, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients reported between 0.85 and 0.86 across different studies. All these instruments demonstrated appropriate reliability and validity and were employed to measure the study variables.

2.3. Data Analysis

For data analysis, descriptive statistics methods such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was applied to examine the normality of the data. In the inferential statistics section, Pearson's correlation coefficient test, multiple regression analysis, and structural equation modeling were utilized through SPSS version 29 and LISREL 8.8 software.

3. Findings and Results

The statistical sample under study consisted of 240 married women residing in Shahriar County who, in 2024, attended cultural centers and mosques in the county for child vision screening programs, family consolidation, and family education programs organized by the Welfare Organization. Given the nature of these programs, all participants were married and had at least five years of marital life. The mean (standard deviation) age was 36.19 years, with an age range between 25 and 50 years. Among the participants, 17.9% were in the 25–30 age group, 24.2% in the 31–35 age group, 31.3% in the 36–40 age group, 16.3% in the 41–45 age group, and 10.4% in the 46–50 age group.

In this section, the research variables are examined descriptively. This includes descriptive reports of the study variables presented in tabular form. These tables help to better understand the structure of the data.

Table 1

Description of the Variables: Marital Infidelity Proneness, Domestic Violence, Marital Distress, and Marital Burnout

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Marital Infidelity Proneness	41.99	6.90	0.929	0.229
Domestic Violence	52.90	21.22	0.120	0.921
Marital Distress	3.20	2.81	0.600	1.100
Marital Burnout	68.97	15.15	-0.350	1.141

Based on Table 1, the research variables can be described as follows:

Marital infidelity proneness: The mean score for this variable was 41.99, with a standard deviation of 6.90 and variance of 47.61 (square of the standard deviation). This indicates that participants, on average, had a score close to 41.99 in this domain, with relatively high variability around the mean.

Domestic violence: The mean score was 52.90, with a standard deviation of 21.22 and variance of 449.33. This demonstrates very high variability in this variable, with participants showing highly diverse scores in this area.

Marital distress: The mean score was 3.20, with a standard deviation of 2.81 and variance of 7.90. This suggests that participants, on average, scored close to 3.20, with relatively low variability in this variable.

Marital burnout: The mean score was 68.97, with a standard deviation of 15.15 and variance of 229.52. This shows high variability in this variable, indicating that participants had very diverse scores in this area.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix Between Research Variables

Variables	Marital Infidelity Proneness	Domestic Violence	Marital Distress	Marital Burnout
Marital Infidelity Proneness	1	0.36*	0.63*	0.52*
Domestic Violence	0.36*	1	0.93*	0.46*
Marital Distress	0.63*	0.93*	1	0.39*
Marital Burnout	0.52*	0.46*	0.39*	1

*$p < 0.01$.

The positive and significant correlation between domestic violence and marital distress (r = 0.93) indicates a strong association between these two variables. Marital burnout also showed positive correlations with the other variables, confirming its mediating role in the research model.

Table 3

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the Variable of Marital Infidelity Proneness

Item	Factor Loading	Status	Item	Factor Loading	Status
EKH1	0.77	Acceptable	EKH16	0.82	Acceptable
EKH2	0.62	Acceptable	EKH17	0.73	Acceptable
EKH3	0.81	Acceptable	EKH18	0.69	Acceptable
EKH4	0.78	Acceptable	EKH19	0.75	Acceptable
EKH5	0.62	Acceptable	EKH20	0.62	Acceptable
EKH6	0.69	Acceptable	EKH21	0.88	Acceptable
EKH7	0.70	Acceptable	EKH22	0.82	Acceptable
EKH8	0.74	Acceptable	EKH23	0.80	Acceptable
EKH9	0.74	Acceptable	EKH24	0.77	Acceptable
EKH10	0.43	Borderline but kept	EKH25	0.92	Very good
EKH11	0.58	Acceptable	EKH26	0.65	Acceptable
EKH12	0.54	Acceptable	EKH27	0.82	Acceptable
EKH13	0.64	Acceptable	EKH28	0.92	Very good
EKH14	0.59	Acceptable	EKH29	0.72	Acceptable
EKH15	0.85	Acceptable	EKH30	0.82	Acceptable

According to Table 3, all items, except EKH10, had significant factor loadings with the latent variable because their significance levels were less than 0.5. Item 10 (loading ≈ 0.43) was retained due to its conceptual importance in the model.

Table 4

CFA Fit Indices for the Variable of Marital Infidelity Proneness

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Result
χ^2/df	2.43	Less than 3	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.081	Good < 0.08, Moderate 0.08–0.10	Good
CFI	0.91	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
NFI	0.93	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
GFI	0.90	Greater than 0.80	Acceptable

All items, except one retained for content reasons, had factor loadings above 0.5 and demonstrated significant relationships with the latent variable of marital infidelity proneness. The fit indices were also within acceptable ranges, indicating that the model had good fit.

The measurement model for the variable of marital infidelity proneness is confirmed and can be used in the final structural equation model.

Table 5

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the Variable of Domestic Violence

Item	Factor Loading	Status	Item	Factor Loading	Status
Kk1	0.79	Acceptable	Kk36	0.68	Acceptable
Kk2	0.76	Acceptable	Kk37	0.62	Acceptable
Kk3	0.87	Acceptable	Kk38	0.76	Acceptable
Kk4	0.86	Acceptable	Kk39	0.75	Acceptable
Kk5	0.84	Acceptable	Kk40	0.87	Acceptable
Kk7	0.69	Acceptable	Kk42	0.42	Borderline but kept
Kk25	0.43	Borderline but kept	Kk60	0.81	Acceptable
Kk27	0.49	Borderline but kept	Kk62	0.70	Acceptable
Kk46	0.89	Acceptable	Kk66	0.88	Acceptable
Kk71	0.75	Acceptable			

According to Table 5, all items except items 25, 27, and 42 had significant factor loadings with the latent variable, as their significance levels were smaller than 0.5. Items 25, 27, and 42, with factor loadings around 0.42–0.49, were retained in the model for content-based reasons.

Table 6

CFA Fit Indices for the Variable of Domestic Violence

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Result
χ^2/df	2.29	Less than 3	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.062	Good < 0.08, Moderate 0.08–0.10	Good
CFI	0.93	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
NFI	0.91	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
GFI	0.85	Greater than 0.80	Acceptable

All items, except three retained for content considerations, had factor loadings above 0.5 and demonstrated significant relationships with the latent variable of domestic violence. The fit indices were also within acceptable ranges, indicating that the model had good fit.

The measurement model for the variable of domestic violence is confirmed and can be used in the final structural equation model.

Table 7

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the Variable of Marital Distress

Item	Factor Loading	Status	Item	Factor Loading	Status
ASH.ZA1	0.80	Acceptable	ASH.ZA6	0.77	Acceptable
ASH.ZA2	0.83	Acceptable	ASH.ZA7	0.86	Acceptable
ASH.ZA3	0.77	Acceptable	ASH.ZA8	0.73	Acceptable
ASH.ZA4	0.87	Acceptable	ASH.ZA9	0.83	Acceptable
ASH.ZA5	0.84	Acceptable	ASH.ZA10	0.77	Acceptable

According to Table 7, all items had significant factor loadings with the latent variable because their significance levels were smaller than 0.5.

Table 8

CFA Fit Indices for the Variable of Marital Distress

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Result
χ^2/df	2.32	Less than 3	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.071	Good < 0.08, Moderate 0.08–0.10	Good
CFI	0.94	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
NFI	0.91	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
GFI	0.89	Greater than 0.80	Acceptable

All items had factor loadings above 0.5 and showed significant relationships with the latent variable of marital distress. The fit indices were also within acceptable ranges, indicating that the model had good fit.

The measurement model for the variable of marital distress is confirmed and can be used in the final structural equation model.

Table 9

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the Variable of Marital Burnout

Item	Factor Loading	Status	Item	Factor Loading	Status
D.Z1	0.78	Acceptable	D.Z11	0.83	Acceptable
D.Z2	0.80	Acceptable	D.Z12	0.80	Acceptable
D.Z3	0.81	Acceptable	D.Z13	0.89	Acceptable
D.Z4	0.75	Acceptable	D.Z14	0.62	Acceptable
D.Z5	0.86	Acceptable	D.Z15	0.61	Acceptable
D.Z6	0.92	Acceptable	D.Z16	0.88	Acceptable
D.Z7	0.76	Acceptable	D.Z17	0.82	Acceptable
D.Z8	0.79	Acceptable	D.Z18	0.73	Acceptable
D.Z9	0.76	Acceptable	D.Z19	0.75	Acceptable
D.Z10	0.69	Acceptable	D.Z20	0.82	Acceptable

According to Table 9, all items for the variable had significant factor loadings with the latent variables, as their significance levels were smaller than 0.05. Moreover, all factor loadings were above 0.5.

Table 10

CFA Fit Indices for the Variable of Marital Burnout

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Result
χ^2/df	2.59	Less than 3	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.070	Good < 0.08, Moderate 0.08–0.10	Good
CFI	0.94	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
NFI	0.91	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
GFI	0.81	Greater than 0.80	Acceptable

All items had factor loadings above 0.5 and demonstrated significant relationships with the latent variable of marital burnout. The fit indices were also within acceptable ranges, showing that the model had good fit.

The measurement model for the variable of marital burnout is confirmed and can be used in the final structural equation model.

In this study, in order to examine the conceptual model and test the proposed hypotheses, the path analysis method within the framework of structural equation modeling was used. LISREL software was employed for this analysis, enabling a precise assessment of the relationships among the study variables. This analytical method allowed the researchers to specify the causal structure among independent, dependent, and mediating variables and to evaluate the goodness of fit of the proposed model.
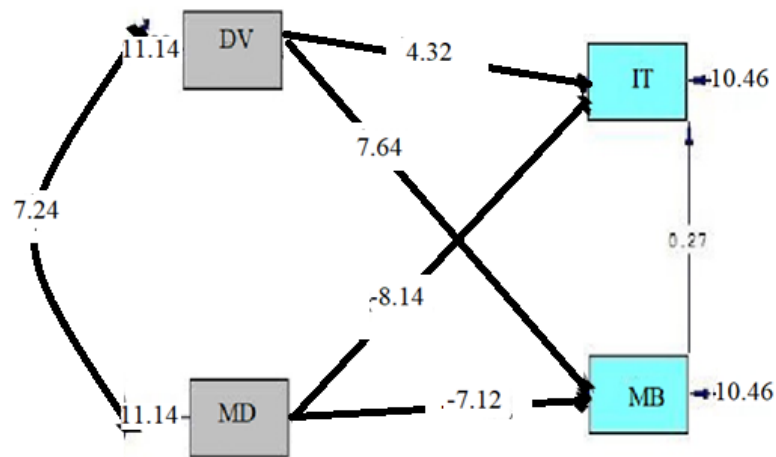
Table 11

Variables in the Model

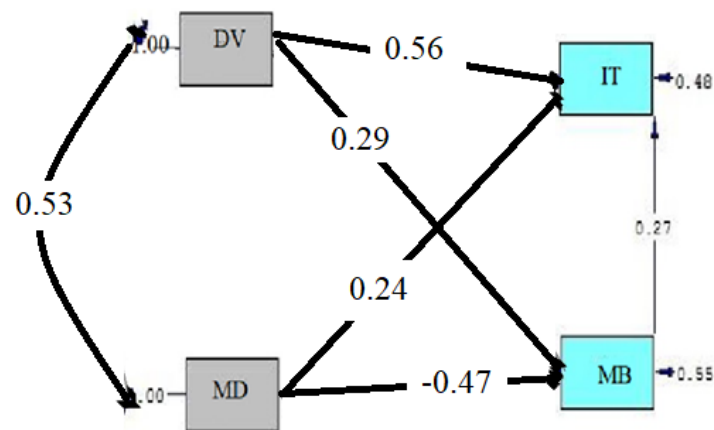| Variable	Label in Model
Marital Infidelity Proneness	IT
Domestic Violence	DV
Marital Distress	MD
Marital Burnout	MB

Figure 1

Model with T-Values

Chi-Square=401.10, df=147, P-value= 0.00000, RMSEA=0.046

Figure 2

Model with Beta Values

Chi-Square=401.10, df=147, P-value= 0.00000, RMSEA=0.046

In the standardized estimation, the coefficients are presented homogenized, meaning that their scale is converted into a common unit, allowing comparison between them. If these values are considered for latent variables and their associated observed variables, they are equivalent to correlation coefficients or factor loadings in confirmatory factor analysis. When computed between two latent variables, they represent path coefficients or standardized beta coefficients in regression.

Using this state, the significance of the relationships among the research variables can be assessed. In this case, values are significant if they fall outside the range (-1.96, +1.96). This means that if a t-value lies between -1.96 and +1.96, it is not significant.

After estimating the model parameters and determining their values, it is necessary to evaluate the fit of the model with the data. In other words, it must be determined how well the proposed theoretical model corresponds with the sample data and is supported by them. For this purpose, several indices and tests are employed to assess the level of correspondence between the model and the observed relationships among the measurable variables.

Table 12

Fit and Significance Indices of the Model

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Result
χ^2/df	2.37	Less than 3	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.046	Good < 0.08, Moderate 0.08–0.10	Good
CFI	0.90	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
NFI	0.94	Greater than 0.90	Acceptable
GFI	0.87	Greater than 0.80	Acceptable

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the research model is confirmed in terms of fit and significance indices.

To test mediation in this hypothesis, Sobel's test was used. Sobel's test is one of the most common approaches for accepting or rejecting hypotheses regarding a mediating variable.

Table 13

Sobel Test Results for the Model Based on Domestic Violence

Value	Parameters
0.29	Path coefficient between independent and mediator variable
0.27	Path coefficient between mediator and dependent variable
0.117	Standard error of the path independent → mediator
0.116	Standard error of the path mediator → dependent
2.54	T-Sobel value

The overall results of the study indicate that the T-Sobel statistic for examining the mediating role of marital burnout in the relationship between domestic violence and marital infidelity proneness was significant, as the value (2.54) was outside the range (-1.96, +1.96). Therefore, the mediation effect of marital burnout is confirmed.

To measure the strength of the indirect effect of the mediator variable, the Variance Accounted For (VAF) index is used. The value of this index ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a stronger mediating effect in the relationship between independent and dependent variables. In practice, VAF measures the proportion of the indirect effect relative to the total effect.

Table 14

Analysis Results of the Model Based on Domestic Violence

Hypothesis	T-Sobel	Standardized Path Coefficient	VAF	Test Result
Domestic Violence → Marital Burnout → Marital Infidelity Proneness	2.54	0.21	0.274	Confirmed

According to the structural model in the significance coefficients state, the indirect t-value (Sobel t-value) between domestic violence and marital infidelity proneness was outside the range (-1.96, +1.96), and thus the hypothesis

was accepted. Based on the obtained VAF value, it was observed that 27.4% of the effect of domestic violence on marital infidelity proneness can be explained through marital burnout.

Table 15

Sobel Test Results for the Model Based on Marital Distress

Value	Parameters
0.29	Path coefficient between independent and mediator variable
0.27	Path coefficient between mediator and dependent variable
0.119	Standard error of the path independent → mediator
0.121	Standard error of the path mediator → dependent
2.74	T-Sobel value

The overall results of the study indicate that the T-Sobel statistic for examining the mediating role of marital burnout in the relationship between marital distress and marital

infidelity proneness was significant, as the value (2.74) was outside the range (-1.96, +1.96). Therefore, the mediation effect of marital burnout is confirmed.

Table 16

Analysis Results of the Model Based on Marital Distress

Hypothesis	T-Sobel	Standardized Path Coefficient	VAF	Test Result
Marital Distress → Marital Burnout → Marital Infidelity Proneness	2.74	0.23	0.279	Confirmed

According to the structural model in the significance coefficients state, the indirect t-value (Sobel t-value) between marital distress and marital infidelity proneness was outside the range (-1.96, +1.96), and thus the hypothesis was accepted. Based on the obtained VAF value, it was observed that 27.9% of the effect of marital distress on marital infidelity proneness can be explained through marital burnout.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to design and validate a model of marital infidelity proneness based on domestic violence and marital distress, with marital burnout as a mediating factor. The findings revealed that both domestic violence and marital distress had direct and significant associations with increased proneness to marital infidelity. Furthermore, marital burnout significantly mediated these relationships, suggesting that the pathway from stressors such as violence and distress to infidelity proneness operates partially through the experience of burnout within the marital relationship.

These results align with prior research that has consistently shown the complex and multifaceted roots of marital infidelity. For example, studies emphasize that

marital conflicts, low satisfaction, and emotional estrangement are among the strongest predictors of infidelity tendencies (Ghiasi et al., 2023; Nasiri et al., 2022). The present study adds to this literature by highlighting the mediating role of marital burnout, which functions as a psychological state that emerges from sustained distress and violence and leads to vulnerability toward infidelity.

The direct association found between domestic violence and infidelity proneness is consistent with previous work that emphasized the destructive role of aggression and abuse in weakening marital bonds and fostering disengagement (Farivar, 2020; Ghalam Baz & Naghipour, 2023). Domestic violence creates environments of fear, resentment, and emotional distance, which can undermine intimacy and commitment. When partners feel unsafe or mistreated, the search for emotional or physical fulfillment outside the relationship may become more appealing. This interpretation is supported by findings showing that individuals experiencing domestic violence report higher tendencies toward betrayal as a coping or compensatory strategy (Zomorodian & Akbari, 2021).

Marital distress also demonstrated a strong positive relationship with proneness to infidelity. This finding corresponds with studies reporting that chronic conflicts,

lack of understanding, and unresolved disputes create a climate where extramarital attractions can develop (Kaygas & Özbay, 2023; Sumbaga & Lapian, 2023). The strong link between distress and infidelity has been identified in both qualitative and quantitative research, where partners describe their extramarital involvement as an escape from constant conflict or dissatisfaction (Chopani et al., 2021; Darabi, 2021). The present findings strengthen this claim by statistically confirming marital distress as a significant predictor.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this study lies in confirming the mediating role of marital burnout. Marital burnout can be conceptualized as a syndrome of emotional fatigue, monotony, and lack of engagement that arises when relational stressors persist (Ventura-León et al., 2025). Our findings show that burnout is not merely a by-product of violence or distress but an active psychological state that channels these conditions into proneness to infidelity. In other words, while distress and violence increase negative feelings directly, they also erode novelty, satisfaction, and engagement, leaving individuals more vulnerable to external attractions.

This aligns with theoretical and empirical research that emphasizes marital burnout as a hidden driver of relational breakdown. For instance, studies have shown that burnout significantly predicts reduced intimacy and increased likelihood of turning toward external emotional or sexual sources (Taziki et al., 2024; Yousefpouri, 2024). By demonstrating its mediating role, this study contributes to understanding burnout not just as an outcome but as a mechanism that translates stressors into risky behaviors.

The results also corroborate prior research suggesting that the roots of infidelity are often embedded in unmet emotional needs and poor communication. Evidence indicates that communication deficits and unresolved conflicts predict higher levels of infidelity (Abedi Naghandar et al., 2023; Fasehi Permehr, 2023). When couples are unable to regulate emotions and resolve disputes effectively, they are more likely to experience relational fatigue, which, over time, crystallizes as burnout. This burnout may then heighten curiosity or openness toward external partners.

Another noteworthy point is that the study's findings complement work on attachment and personality in explaining infidelity. For example, insecure attachment has been identified as a predictor of infidelity proneness, particularly when combined with conflict and dissatisfaction (Ghiasi et al., 2023; Sumbaga & Lapian, 2023). Similarly,

personality traits such as narcissism and low conscientiousness are linked to increased risk of infidelity (Ogwuche et al., 2024; Salehzadeh et al., 2024). However, while attachment and personality explain individual predispositions, this study highlights burnout as a contextual process within the relationship that operates alongside these predispositions.

The findings are also consistent with phenomenological studies of individuals who engage in infidelity. For instance, qualitative research shows that partners often report seeking novelty, excitement, and escape from monotony as major reasons for extramarital involvement (Ghaem Mohammadi et al., 2023; Najjar et al., 2024). Similarly, studies have noted that individuals who experience burnout in marriage may idealize external relationships as sources of vitality and affirmation (Paulinus, 2022; Purwaningsih et al., 2020). Our results provide quantitative support for these interpretations by statistically confirming the mediating effect of burnout.

The importance of considering marital burnout is further underscored by research on interventions. For instance, therapies focusing on enhancing marital intimacy, novelty, and emotion regulation have been shown to reduce infidelity risk (Pasha, 2024; Yousefpouri, 2024). This suggests that targeting burnout directly may serve as a preventive strategy. By emphasizing burnout reduction, couples can be encouraged to create shared positive experiences, engage in meaningful activities, and rebuild intimacy—strategies that buffer against the lure of extramarital involvement.

Another aspect of the findings relates to the cultural and social dimensions of infidelity. Prior studies in diverse contexts, including Iran and other societies, show that social norms, media, and modern stressors influence how individuals perceive and engage in infidelity (Nazari, 2024; Shakeri et al., 2019). This implies that burnout may interact with broader sociocultural conditions to shape vulnerability. In highly collectivist contexts where divorce carries stigma, burnout may quietly drive extramarital behaviors instead of open separation. This cultural dimension requires further exploration.

In summary, this study confirms that both domestic violence and marital distress significantly predict proneness to infidelity and that marital burnout plays a crucial mediating role. These findings integrate and extend prior research, providing a comprehensive view of how structural stressors and psychological states interact to foster infidelity proneness.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

Although the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences, making it impossible to determine the temporal sequence of violence, distress, burnout, and infidelity. Second, the reliance on self-reported measures may have introduced social desirability bias, particularly given the sensitivity of the topic. Third, the sample was restricted to married women in Shahriar County, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations, including men, unmarried individuals, or couples in different cultural contexts. Finally, the study did not incorporate personality variables or attachment styles, which have been identified as significant predictors in the literature.

Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs to establish the causal pathways between domestic violence, marital distress, burnout, and infidelity. Including both partners in dyadic designs would provide a more complete picture of the relational dynamics. Researchers should also examine the role of personality traits, attachment styles, and socio-cultural factors in interaction with relational stressors. Cross-cultural comparative studies would be particularly useful for identifying universal versus culture-specific predictors. Finally, integrating qualitative methods with structural modeling could enrich the understanding of how lived experiences align with statistical models.

From a practical perspective, the findings emphasize the need for preventive interventions focusing on reducing domestic violence, enhancing conflict resolution skills, and addressing marital burnout. Therapists should incorporate burnout reduction strategies, such as shared leisure and intimacy-building activities, into marital counseling. Policymakers should also consider educational and community-based initiatives to reduce violence and promote healthy communication in families. Early identification of distress and violence in marital relationships could serve as an important preventive measure against infidelity, ultimately supporting family stability and societal well-being.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

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.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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