




Examining the Relationship Between Emotion Regulation Difficulties and Marital Burnout With the Mediating Role of Intimacy Styles in Couples Applying for Divorce

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study was to examine the structural relationships between emotion regulation and marital burnout with the mediating role of intimacy styles among couples seeking divorce.

Methods and Materials: This applied study employed a descriptive–correlational design using structural equation modeling. The statistical population consisted of 500 individuals (250 couples) applying for divorce who referred to the Dispute Resolution Councils of Robat Karim and Parand in 2025, from whom participants were selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), the Marital Intimacy Scale (MIS), and the Couple Burnout Measure (CBM). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS (Version 24). Model fit was evaluated through multiple indices including CMIN/DF, GFI, CFI, NFI, and RMSEA. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients.

Findings: Structural equation modeling indicated that emotion regulation had a significant positive effect on intimacy styles ($\beta = 0.289, p < .001$) and a significant negative direct effect on marital burnout ($\beta = -0.221, p < .001$). Intimacy styles exerted a significant negative effect on marital burnout ($\beta = -0.259, p < .001$). Bootstrap analysis confirmed that intimacy styles significantly mediated the relationship between emotion regulation and marital burnout (indirect effect $\beta = -0.075, p = .009$), with a total effect of $\beta = -0.296$.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that difficulties in emotion regulation substantially increase marital burnout both directly and indirectly through the erosion of marital intimacy, highlighting intimacy as a critical mechanism linking emotional processes to relational deterioration in divorce-seeking couples.

Keywords: Difficulties in emotion regulation; marital burnout; intimacy styles; divorce; couples

1. Introduction

Marriage constitutes one of the most fundamental and complex interpersonal institutions in human life, providing emotional security, social stability, and psychological well-being for individuals and societies. Despite its central role, contemporary marital relationships are increasingly threatened by escalating levels of relational dissatisfaction, emotional disengagement, and psychological exhaustion, which ultimately manifest as marital burnout and divorce. Empirical evidence indicates that the quality of marital functioning is profoundly shaped by partners' capacities for emotional regulation, intimacy development, and adaptive interactional patterns, particularly in couples who experience chronic conflict and emotional distance (Mohammadiya & Foroughi Kalderah, 2024; Sotoudeh et al., 2022). The accelerating rates of marital dissolution across diverse cultural contexts underscore the urgent need for systematic investigation of the psychological mechanisms that undermine marital stability and emotional connection.

Marital burnout is conceptualized as a multidimensional syndrome encompassing emotional exhaustion, psychological depletion, and physical fatigue resulting from prolonged relational stress and unmet emotional needs. It reflects a progressive deterioration of marital vitality, intimacy, and commitment, often accompanied by feelings of hopelessness, detachment, and emotional numbness. Recent studies have emphasized that marital burnout is not merely an outcome of situational conflict but rather the cumulative product of deeper emotional and regulatory dysfunctions embedded within the marital system (Ghodrati et al., 2022; Koçyiğit & Uzun, 2024; Minou Sepehr et al., 2022). These findings position marital burnout as a central clinical construct for understanding relational breakdown and emotional divorce.

Emotion regulation has emerged as one of the most influential psychological determinants of marital health. It refers to individuals' ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional responses in ways that promote adaptive functioning and relational harmony. Deficits in emotion regulation lead to heightened emotional reactivity, ineffective conflict management, and maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, which cumulatively erode marital satisfaction and intimacy (Kocyiğit, 2025; Sarakhabi Abdolmaleki et al., 2022). In distressed marriages, poor emotion regulation amplifies negative emotional cycles,

intensifies unresolved conflicts, and accelerates emotional disengagement between partners.

Parallel to emotion regulation, marital intimacy represents a core relational resource that sustains emotional bonding, mutual understanding, and psychological security. Intimacy is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, physical, sexual, psychological, spiritual, social–recreational, and aesthetic–cognitive components. Each dimension contributes uniquely to partners' subjective experience of closeness and relational fulfillment. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that diminished intimacy is one of the strongest predictors of marital dissatisfaction, emotional divorce, and eventual separation (Homayi et al., 2023; Jahanbakhshie et al., 2025; Lee & Yoon, 2023). When intimacy deteriorates, couples experience increasing emotional distance, reduced communication quality, and escalating vulnerability to burnout.

Recent theoretical developments propose that emotion regulation and intimacy are not independent processes but are dynamically interwoven within marital functioning. Emotion regulation skills directly influence partners' capacity to engage in emotionally safe, open, and responsive interactions, thereby facilitating the development and maintenance of intimacy. Conversely, impaired emotion regulation disrupts empathic communication and emotional responsiveness, undermining intimacy and accelerating relational exhaustion (Kazemi Kahnoumi et al., 2022; Koçyiğit & Uzun, 2024). This reciprocal interplay positions emotion regulation as a foundational mechanism through which marital intimacy is cultivated and preserved.

In clinical contexts, couples seeking divorce often present with severe deficits in both emotion regulation and intimacy, accompanied by high levels of marital burnout. Investigations among divorce-seeking populations reveal that these couples report significantly lower emotional closeness, reduced sexual satisfaction, and elevated emotional exhaustion compared to non-distressed couples (Mohammadiya & Foroughi Kalderah, 2024; Sotoudeh et al., 2022). Such patterns suggest that emotional dysregulation and intimacy erosion constitute central pathways through which marital relationships collapse.

Multiple empirical models have attempted to map the psychological architecture underlying marital burnout. Ghodrati et al. demonstrated that emotion-focused interventions significantly reduce marital boredom and enhance moral commitment among couples pursuing divorce, highlighting the pivotal role of emotional processing in marital recovery (Ghodrati et al., 2022).

Similarly, Homayi et al. found that systemic couple therapy improves self-differentiation, intimacy, and marital burnout, reinforcing the integrative role of emotional and relational processes in marital health (Homayi et al., 2023). These findings align with broader theoretical frameworks suggesting that sustainable marital functioning requires the convergence of emotional regulation, relational intimacy, and adaptive communication patterns.

Furthermore, emerging research underscores the mediating function of intimacy in the relationship between emotion-related processes and marital outcomes. For instance, Kazemi Kahnoumi et al. demonstrated that emotional intelligence mediates the effects of differentiation and attachment on marital boredom, while Zarei Baghe Bidi and Etemadi Far showed that communication skills mediate the association between emotional unawareness and marital boredom among divorce-seeking couples (Kazemi Kahnoumi et al., 2022; Zarei Baghe Bidi & Etemadi Far, 2020). These findings suggest that relational competencies serve as critical transmission channels through which emotional processes shape marital experiences.

The protective role of intimacy extends beyond conflict resolution to buffering marital satisfaction against external stressors. Nugrahani et al. reported that emotional intimacy shields marital satisfaction from role conflict among dual-earner couples, emphasizing intimacy's stabilizing function in high-stress relational environments (Nugrahani et al., 2025). Likewise, Lee and Yoon documented the profound impact of bodily stress and sexual functioning on marital intimacy in medically vulnerable populations, demonstrating the sensitivity of intimacy to emotional and physiological challenges (Lee & Yoon, 2023). Collectively, these studies illuminate intimacy as a central regulatory hub that absorbs emotional strain and preserves relational equilibrium.

Recent structural modeling research has further refined understanding of these complex interrelations. Pouya et al. developed a comprehensive model demonstrating that attachment styles predict marital burnout through the mediating roles of marital self-regulation and marital intimacy, offering robust empirical support for the hierarchical positioning of intimacy within marital functioning (Pouya et al., 2025). Similarly, Sarakhabi Abdolmaleki et al. proposed an integrative framework in which emotional regulation strategies influence emotional divorce through marital boredom, reinforcing the sequential cascade from emotional processes to relational outcomes (Sarakhabi Abdolmaleki et al., 2022). These models

converge on the proposition that emotion regulation constitutes a distal determinant, intimacy a proximal mediator, and marital burnout a core relational outcome.

Despite this expanding body of literature, several conceptual and empirical gaps remain. First, most existing studies have examined isolated components of marital functioning without fully integrating emotion regulation, intimacy, and marital burnout within a unified structural framework. Second, limited research has focused specifically on divorce-seeking couples, a population that exhibits the most severe relational deterioration and therefore offers critical insight into marital breakdown mechanisms (Mohammadiya & Foroughi Kalderah, 2024; Sotoudeh et al., 2022). Third, the multidimensional nature of intimacy has often been underexplored, with many studies relying on unidimensional measures that fail to capture the nuanced pathways through which different forms of intimacy influence marital outcomes.

Moreover, while therapeutic interventions such as emotion-focused therapy and systemic couple therapy have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing marital distress, the precise psychological mechanisms through which these interventions operate remain insufficiently specified. Understanding how emotion regulation capacities translate into changes in intimacy and subsequently reduce marital burnout would substantially enhance both theoretical clarity and clinical precision (Ghodrati et al., 2022; Mirabi et al., 2021). Such knowledge is essential for designing targeted interventions that directly address the emotional–intimacy–burnout nexus.

In parallel, growing attention has been directed toward emotional divorce, a phenomenon characterized by emotional disengagement while the marital bond formally persists. Jahanbakhshie et al. showed that marital commitment and family power structures predict emotional divorce through intimacy, reinforcing the centrality of intimacy as the psychological bridge between emotional processes and relational dissolution (Jahanbakhshie et al., 2025). These findings further validate the conceptual placement of intimacy as a mediating mechanism linking intrapersonal emotion regulation to broader marital outcomes.

Taken together, the accumulating evidence indicates that marital burnout represents the downstream manifestation of prolonged emotional dysregulation and intimacy erosion. However, the specific structural configuration of these relationships remains under-specified, particularly among couples actively pursuing divorce. Addressing this gap

requires an integrative empirical model that simultaneously examines emotion regulation, multidimensional intimacy, and marital burnout within a coherent analytic framework.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to contribute to the literature by constructing and testing a comprehensive structural model that elucidates the direct and indirect pathways linking emotion regulation to marital burnout through the mediating role of intimacy styles among couples seeking divorce.

The aim of this study is to examine the structural relationships between emotion regulation and marital burnout with the mediating role of intimacy styles in couples applying for divorce.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study is a descriptive–correlational investigation based on structural equation modeling and, in terms of purpose, is an applied study. To evaluate the proposed structural model, confirmatory factor analysis was employed. The inclusion criteria consisted of: residence of the participating couples in Robat Karim County or the new city of Parand, having passed at least six months since the beginning of marital life, a minimum educational level of elementary school for both spouses, and providing informed consent for participation and withdrawal from the study. The sample of the present study consisted of 500 individuals (250 couples) applying for divorce, who were selected through convenience sampling from among divorce-seeking couples in Tehran Province who had referred to the Dispute Resolution Councils of Robat Karim and Parand.

2.2. Measures

The Marital Intimacy Scale (MIS) by Walker and Thompson was developed in 1983 to measure intimacy in marital relationships. This scale contains 17 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from never to always. Higher scores indicate greater marital intimacy. Regarding the psychometric properties of this scale, Walker and Thompson (1983) reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.97. In Iranian studies, the validity and reliability of this scale have also been examined. Naderi and Azadmanesh (2012) reported the reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha as 0.90 and split-half reliability as 0.83. They also assessed the face validity of the

questionnaire, and university professors of psychology and counseling confirmed its satisfactory validity.

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) by Gratz and Roemer (2004) is a 36-item self-report instrument developed for the clinical assessment of difficulties in emotion regulation. The items of this scale were generated and selected based on extensive foundational discussions with colleagues familiar with emotion regulation literature. The Generalized Expectancy for Negative Mood Regulation Scale (Catanzaro & Mearns, 1990, as cited in Gratz & Roemer, 2004) served as a conceptual model for the development of this instrument. This scale is designed to assess difficulties in emotion regulation during periods of emotional distress, when effective emotion regulation strategies are required. Responses are provided on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never; 0–10%) to 5 (almost always; 91–100%). One item was removed due to low correlation with the total scale, and four items were excluded due to low or double factor loadings, leaving 36 items from the initial 41. Factor analysis identified six factors: nonacceptance of emotional responses, difficulties engaging in goal-directed behavior, impulse control difficulties, lack of emotional awareness, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity. The results indicated high internal consistency for the scale ($\alpha = .93$). All six DERS subscales demonstrated Cronbach's alpha coefficients above .80. Furthermore, the DERS showed significant correlations with the Negative Mood Regulation Scale (NMS) and the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire developed by Hayes et al. (2009). Based on the findings of Azizi Mirzaei and Shams, the Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was estimated at .92. Higher scores indicate greater difficulty in emotion regulation. Items 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 17, 20, 22, 24, and 34 are reverse scored.

The Couple Burnout Measure (CBM) developed by Pines (1996) is a self-report instrument designed to assess the degree of marital burnout among couples. This questionnaire contains 21 items across three dimensions: physical exhaustion (e.g., fatigue, lethargy, and sleep disturbances), emotional exhaustion (e.g., feelings of depression, hopelessness, and entrapment), and psychological exhaustion (e.g., feelings of worthlessness, frustration, and anger toward one's spouse). All items are rated on a 7-point scale, where 1 indicates no experience of the described condition and 7 indicates a high level of experience.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data of the present study were analyzed using the structural equation modeling method with SPSS and AMOS statistical software, Version 24.

3. Findings and Results

Prior to data analysis, the reliability of the research instruments was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficients were confirmed for emotion regulation (0.895), intimacy styles (0.742), and marital burnout (0.755).

Table 1

Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion (Mean and Standard Deviation) of the Main Study Variables

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| Emotion regulation | 3.001 | 0.070 |
| Marital burnout | 3.986 | 0.162 |
| Marital intimacy – Physical | 4.562 | 1.727 |
| Marital intimacy – Emotional | 4.702 | 1.158 |
| Marital intimacy – Sexual | 3.296 | 1.309 |
| Marital intimacy – Psychological | 3.532 | 1.205 |
| Marital intimacy – Social–Recreational | 5.318 | 1.564 |
| Marital intimacy – Spiritual | 3.338 | 1.042 |
| Marital intimacy – Aesthetic | 3.440 | 1.725 |

According to Table 1, the mean of emotion regulation was 3.001 with a standard deviation of 0.070; the mean of marital burnout was 3.986 with a standard deviation of 0.162; the mean of physical intimacy was 4.562 with a standard deviation of 1.727; the mean of emotional intimacy was 4.702 with a standard deviation of 1.158; the mean of sexual intimacy was 3.296 with a standard deviation of

1.309; the mean of psychological intimacy was 3.532 with a standard deviation of 1.205; the mean of social–recreational intimacy was 5.318 with a standard deviation of 1.564; the mean of spiritual intimacy was 3.338 with a standard deviation of 1.042; and the mean of aesthetic intimacy was 3.440 with a standard deviation of 1.725.

Table 2

Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test for Normality of the Distribution of Variables

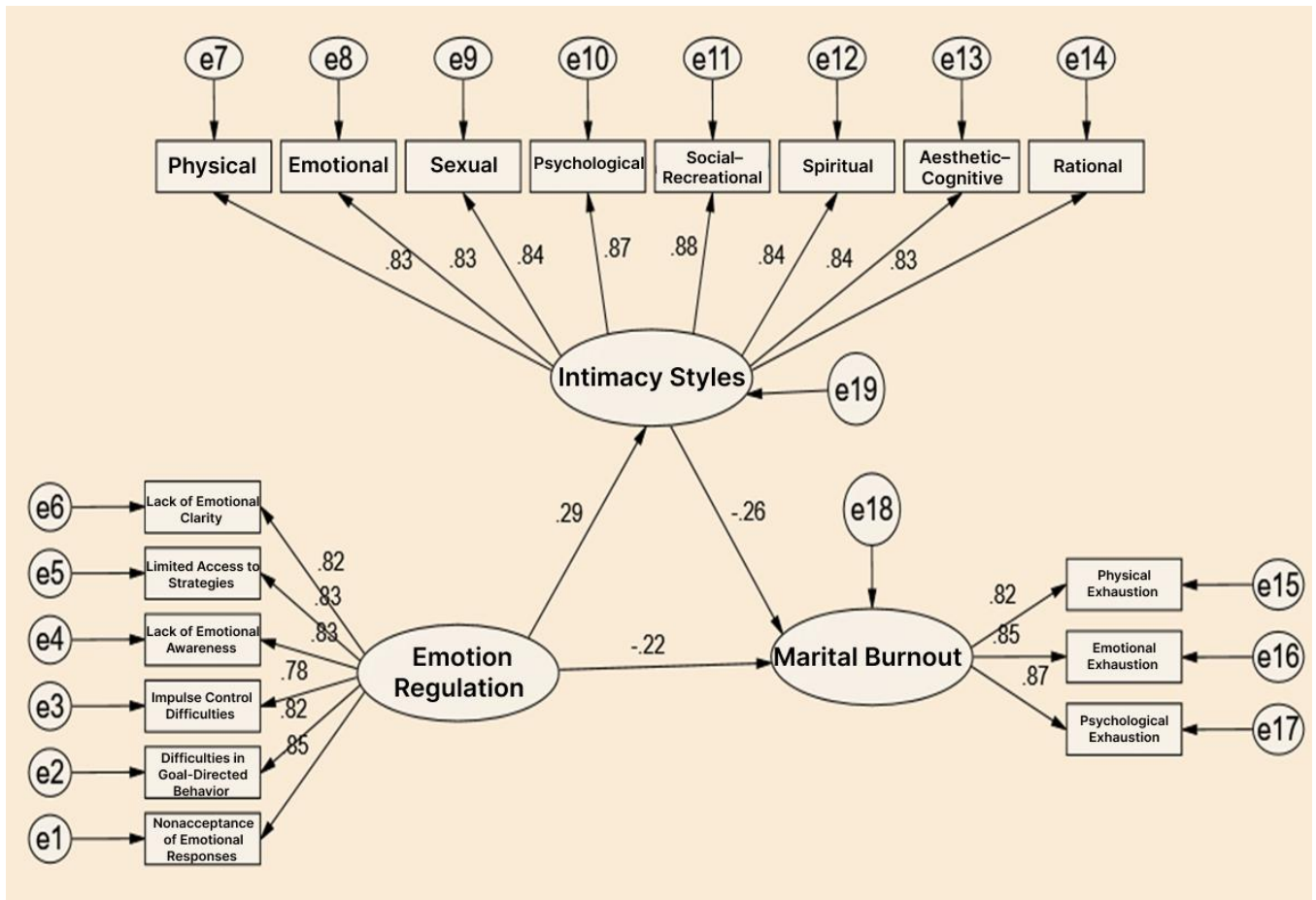
| Variables | Significance Level | Test Result |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|
| Emotion regulation | 0.060 | Normal distribution |
| Marital burnout | 0.200 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Physical | 0.180 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Emotional | 0.185 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Sexual | 0.097 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Psychological | 0.081 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Social–Recreational | 0.200 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Spiritual | 0.150 | Normal distribution |
| Marital intimacy – Aesthetic | 0.074 | Normal distribution |

Based on the above test results and the significance levels of all variables being greater than 0.05, it can be inferred that all variables follow a normal distribution.

The results of the structural model fit are presented in Figure 1 and Tables 3 and 4. The model fit indices shown in Figure 1 indicate that the conceptual model demonstrates acceptable fit.

Figure 1

Standardized coefficients of the conceptual model of relationships among emotion regulation, intimacy styles, and marital burnout.



Note. CMIN/DF = 1.450, GFI = 0.950, CFI = 0.981, NFI = 0.981, RMSEA = 0.032.

Table 3

Examination of the Direct Effects of the Research Variables

| Direct Path | Standardized Direct Effect | t Value | Significance Level | Result |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|--------------------|-----------|
| Emotion Regulation → Intimacy Styles | 0.289 | 6.121 | 0.000 | Supported |
| Emotion Regulation → Marital Burnout | -0.221 | 4.460 | 0.000 | Supported |
| Intimacy Styles → Marital Burnout | -0.259 | 5.273 | 0.000 | Supported |

According to Table 3, since the absolute t-values for all direct paths are greater than 1.96 and their significance levels are less than 0.05, the relationships are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, all direct paths of the study are supported.

Based on the conceptual model of the study, in addition to the direct effects, the indirect effect of emotion regulation on marital burnout through the mediating variable of intimacy styles was estimated. For this purpose, the bootstrap testing method was applied.

Table 4

Bootstrap Test Results for the Indirect Effect of Emotion Regulation on Marital Burnout Through the Mediating Role of Intimacy Styles

| Variable | t value | Sig. | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Total Effect |
|--|---------|-------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Emotion regulation → Marital burnout (mediated by intimacy styles) | 2.480 | 0.009 | -0.221 | -0.075 | -0.296 |

Table 4 presents the bootstrap test results for the indirect effect of emotion regulation on marital burnout through the mediating role of intimacy styles. The findings indicate that emotion regulation, through the mediating role of intimacy styles, has a statistically significant indirect effect on marital burnout with a coefficient of -0.075 at the 0.05 significance level. Moreover, in addition to its direct effect on marital burnout with a coefficient of -0.221 , emotion regulation also has an indirect effect through the mediating role of intimacy styles with a coefficient of -0.075 , resulting in a total effect coefficient of -0.296 .

4. Discussion

The present study sought to examine the structural relationships between emotion regulation and marital burnout with the mediating role of intimacy styles among couples applying for divorce. The findings provide strong empirical support for the proposed conceptual model and clarify the psychological mechanisms through which emotional processes and relational dynamics interact to influence marital burnout. The results demonstrated that emotion regulation exerts both a direct and an indirect effect on marital burnout, with intimacy styles functioning as a significant mediating variable. These results underscore the central role of emotional functioning and relational closeness in sustaining marital stability and preventing relational exhaustion.

The significant negative direct effect of emotion regulation on marital burnout indicates that individuals who possess stronger emotion regulation abilities experience lower levels of emotional, psychological, and physical exhaustion within their marital relationships. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that deficits in emotion regulation contribute substantially to chronic marital distress, emotional withdrawal, and relational fatigue (Kocuyigit, 2025; Sarakhabi Abdolmaleki et al., 2022). When individuals lack effective strategies for managing negative affect, they are more likely to engage in maladaptive interaction patterns such as emotional escalation, withdrawal, and defensive communication, all of which accelerate relational depletion and burnout. The present results extend this body of knowledge by demonstrating that emotion regulation remains a powerful predictor of marital burnout even among highly distressed couples actively seeking divorce.

Moreover, the findings revealed that emotion regulation positively predicts intimacy styles, indicating that higher emotional regulation capacity is associated with stronger emotional, psychological, sexual, and social intimacy. This finding aligns closely with previous studies showing that emotional regulation facilitates empathic responsiveness, emotional availability, and constructive communication between partners, thereby fostering relational closeness and mutual understanding (Kazemi Kahnoumi et al., 2022; Koçuyiğit & Uzun, 2024). Couples who regulate emotions effectively are better equipped to tolerate relational stress, navigate conflict productively, and remain emotionally connected during periods of adversity. This strengthens intimacy across multiple domains and protects the marital bond from deterioration.

The strong negative association between intimacy styles and marital burnout observed in this study further confirms intimacy as a crucial protective factor against relational exhaustion. Consistent with prior research, diminished intimacy was associated with heightened marital burnout, whereas stronger intimacy corresponded with reduced burnout symptoms (Homayi et al., 2023; Minou Sepehr et al., 2022). Intimacy serves as a psychological buffer that mitigates the impact of stressors, enhances emotional security, and fosters relational resilience. When intimacy erodes, couples experience increasing emotional distance, reduced relational satisfaction, and heightened vulnerability to burnout and emotional divorce.

Most importantly, the mediation analysis demonstrated that intimacy styles significantly transmit the effect of emotion regulation on marital burnout. This indicates that emotion regulation reduces marital burnout not only directly but also indirectly by strengthening relational intimacy. This result provides compelling support for theoretical models that position intimacy as the proximal relational mechanism through which intrapersonal emotional processes shape long-term marital outcomes (Jahanbakhshie et al., 2025; Pouya et al., 2025). Emotion regulation influences how partners express needs, respond to vulnerability, manage conflict, and maintain emotional safety. These processes, in turn, shape the quality of intimacy, which directly determines whether marital stress accumulates into burnout or is effectively absorbed within the relational system.

These findings are consistent with previous intervention studies demonstrating that therapeutic approaches targeting emotional processing and relational closeness significantly reduce marital distress and burnout. Ghodrati et al. reported that emotion-focused therapy decreases marital boredom

and strengthens moral commitment among couples pursuing divorce (Ghodrati et al., 2022). Similarly, Homayi et al. found that systemic couple therapy improves intimacy and reduces marital burnout in couples experiencing emotional divorce (Homayi et al., 2023). The current study complements these findings by clarifying the structural pathways through which emotional and relational processes interact to produce these therapeutic outcomes.

Furthermore, the present results align with research demonstrating the stabilizing role of intimacy in buffering marital relationships against external and internal stressors. Nugrahani et al. showed that emotional intimacy protects marital satisfaction from role conflict in dual-earner couples (Nugrahani et al., 2025). Lee and Yoon demonstrated that disruptions in emotional and sexual functioning significantly undermine marital intimacy in medically stressed couples (Lee & Yoon, 2023). Together with the current findings, these studies emphasize intimacy as the core relational asset that sustains marital functioning across diverse stress contexts.

Importantly, the present study extends existing literature by focusing specifically on couples seeking divorce, a population characterized by advanced relational deterioration. Previous investigations indicate that such couples exhibit significantly higher levels of emotional dysregulation, reduced intimacy, and increased marital burnout compared to non-distressed couples (Mohammadiya & Foroughi Kalderah, 2024; Sotoudeh et al., 2022). By examining this high-risk group, the study provides deeper insight into the mechanisms underlying marital collapse and emotional divorce. The findings suggest that even in severely distressed relationships, strengthening emotion regulation and intimacy may still offer meaningful opportunities for relational recovery or, at minimum, more adaptive separation processes.

The findings also reinforce integrative models of marital functioning that emphasize the interaction of attachment, emotional processes, and relational competencies. Sarakhabi Abdolmaleki et al. demonstrated that emotional regulation strategies predict emotional divorce through marital boredom (Sarakhabi Abdolmaleki et al., 2022). Zarei Baghe Bidi and Etemadi Far showed that communication skills mediate the relationship between emotional unawareness and marital boredom (Zarei Baghe Bidi & Etemadi Far, 2020). Kazemi Kahnoumi et al. found that emotional intelligence mediates the effects of differentiation and attachment on marital boredom (Kazemi Kahnoumi et al., 2022). The present study integrates these perspectives by

positioning intimacy as the central mediator connecting emotion regulation to marital burnout.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings highlight marital burnout as the downstream consequence of chronic emotional dysregulation and intimacy erosion. The structural model clarifies how intrapersonal emotional capacities translate into relational outcomes, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding marital breakdown among couples seeking divorce. These results provide valuable theoretical integration and strong empirical support for emotion-focused and intimacy-based interventions in couple therapy.

6. Limitations & Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretation of the observed relationships. Second, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response biases and shared method variance. Third, the sample consisted exclusively of couples applying for divorce, which limits the generalizability of the findings to non-distressed or community samples. Fourth, cultural factors specific to the study context may influence emotional expression and intimacy patterns, potentially limiting cross-cultural applicability.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the temporal dynamics of emotion regulation, intimacy, and marital burnout. Incorporating multi-method assessments, including observational and partner-report measures, would enhance validity. Studies should also examine the differential roles of specific intimacy dimensions and explore gender-based variations in emotional regulation processes. Expanding research to diverse cultural and relational contexts would further strengthen the generalizability of the model.

The findings suggest that couple therapy and marital counseling programs should prioritize the development of emotion regulation skills and the systematic enhancement of intimacy across emotional, psychological, and relational domains. Interventions that integrate emotional awareness training, communication skill development, and intimacy-building exercises may significantly reduce marital burnout and improve relationship stability. Therapists working with divorce-seeking couples should assess emotional regulation capacities and intimacy patterns early in treatment and tailor

interventions accordingly to promote relational healing and informed decision-making.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

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

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

Authors' Contributions

M.A.Y. was responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, development of the research framework, coordination of participant recruitment and data collection, statistical analysis and interpretation of the results, and preparation, critical revision, and final approval of the manuscript. The author confirms accountability for all aspects of the work and the integrity of the reported findings.

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.

Funding

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