




The Mediating Role of Frustration Tolerance in the Relationship Between Early Maladaptive Schemas, Self-Differentiation, and Marital Conflict in Individuals Applying for Divorce


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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the opening paragraph defines marital conflict as follows: “Marital conflict is one of the most pervasive and multifaceted challenges within intimate relationships and has long been recognized as a central determinant of individual psychological well-being, family functioning, and social stability.” While this is an effective and scholarly opening, the paragraph remains largely descriptive; to enhance the theoretical sharpness, I recommend that you more explicitly distinguish between chronic, high-intensity marital conflict and normative conflict, and clarify whether the current study focuses specifically on couples at the high-conflict, divorce-seeking end of the spectrum, integrating this with the later statement that the population consists of “all individuals applying for divorce” in Karaj and Hashtgerd (page 4), so that the conceptualization of conflict is consistent with the actual sample.

In the third Introduction paragraph on self-differentiation, you write: “Self-differentiation refers to an individual’s ability to maintain emotional autonomy while remaining emotionally connected to others.” and contrast high versus low differentiation. While this is faithful to Bowen’s theory, the manuscript would benefit from clarifying whether you conceptualize

self-differentiation as a trait-like characteristic or as a relationally contextual construct that may be particularly salient under divorce-related stress; this distinction is especially important given your cross-sectional design and the highly specific context of “individuals applying for divorce,” and should be acknowledged either as a conceptual assumption or as a limitation.

Still in the self-differentiation paragraph, you state that “Empirical evidence supports the significant role of self-differentiation in marital functioning, indicating that higher levels of differentiation are associated with greater marital satisfaction and lower levels of conflict (Jo & Lee, 2025; Sadeghi et al., 2022).” This literature review is concise but somewhat generic; I recommend adding at least one study that specifically examines self-differentiation in samples facing marital dissolution or high conflict, or, if such work is lacking, explicitly framing your study as addressing this gap (i.e., examining differentiation in a divorce-applicant sample), which would sharpen the contribution.

In the Methods section, you describe the design as follows: “The present study was fundamental in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of data collection method. In this study, the relationships among variables were examined without any manipulation using structural equation modeling (SEM).” The label “fundamental” is somewhat ambiguous in English-language empirical research; I suggest replacing it with a more standard term (e.g., “basic research” or “applied descriptive-correlational study”) and explicitly stating that the design is cross-sectional, as this has important implications for causal interpretation of the mediating role of frustration tolerance.

In the same paragraph, you state: “Accordingly, self-differentiation was considered as the exogenous variable, frustration tolerance as the mediating variable, and marital conflict as the endogenous variable, all of which were analyzed.” However, the article title also mentions early maladaptive schemas (“The Mediating Role of Frustration Tolerance in the Relationship Between Early Maladaptive Schemas, Self-Differentiation, and Marital Conflict...”), which implies that both schemas and self-differentiation are exogenous predictors. Please revise this section to clearly describe all exogenous variables, the specific direct and indirect paths estimated, and whether there are parallel mediation paths from both schemas and self-differentiation to marital conflict via frustration tolerance; otherwise, the model specification remains underspecified for the reader.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the same introductory paragraph, you state that “Contemporary psychological research conceptualizes marital conflict not merely as episodic disagreement but as a complex interactional pattern influenced by cognitive, emotional, and relational variables that unfold over time.” This is a strong conceptual framing, but it would benefit from being linked explicitly to your chosen predictors—early maladaptive schemas, self-differentiation, and frustration tolerance—by briefly specifying which of these variables map onto the “cognitive,” “emotional,” and “relational” components of conflict, thereby embedding your model more clearly within the interactional perspective you invoke.

In the second Introduction paragraph, you write that “Among the key psychological constructs implicated in marital conflict, early maladaptive schemas have received considerable empirical attention.” and then define these schemas as “pervasive and dysfunctional cognitive-emotional patterns that originate in childhood and are elaborated throughout life.” This section could be strengthened by specifying which of Young’s schema domains (e.g., disconnection/rejection, impaired autonomy) are most theoretically relevant to marital conflict in divorce applicants, and by explicitly stating whether your analysis is based on total schema score, domain scores, or specific schemas, since this will materially affect how the findings can be interpreted and applied clinically.

Later in the same paragraph, you note that “research has demonstrated that early maladaptive schemas are significantly associated with marital conflict and can predict maladaptive relational outcomes even after controlling for other psychological variables (Moradi Davijani et al., 2024; Sharif Nia et al., 2023).” Given that your own model includes both early maladaptive schemas and self-differentiation as predictors, it would be important to clarify the incremental role of schemas above and beyond self-differentiation; I suggest that you either formulate an explicit hypothesis regarding the relative predictive power

of schemas versus differentiation, or at least discuss, in the Discussion section, whether your results suggest that schemas operate partly through reduced self-differentiation or via distinct pathways.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.