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# Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling of Divorce Intention Based on Attachment Insecurity, Marital Disillusionment, Emotional Loneliness, and Relationship Commitment

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A B S T R A C T

**Objective:** This study aimed to test a covariance-based structural equation model of divorce intention based on attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment among married adults in Canada.

**Methods and Materials:** This cross-sectional correlational study was conducted on 428 legally married adults residing in Canada who were recruited through online community advertisements, family and relationship forums, community organizations, and electronic announcements. Participants completed measures of adult romantic attachment, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, relationship commitment, and divorce intention. Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. Preliminary analyses examined normality, multicollinearity, reliability, and bivariate associations. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the measurement model, followed by covariance-based structural equation modeling using maximum-likelihood estimation. Model fit was evaluated using $\chi^2$/df, GFI, CFI, TLI, IFI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

**Findings:** The structural model demonstrated good fit to the data, $\chi^2(293) = 584.22$, $\chi^2/df = 1.99$, GFI = .906, CFI = .953, TLI = .947, IFI = .953, RMSEA = .048, and SRMR = .046. Attachment insecurity had a significant positive effect on divorce intention ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$), as did marital disillusionment ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) and emotional loneliness ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). Relationship commitment had a significant negative effect on divorce intention ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .001$). Marital disillusionment was the strongest positive predictor. Together, the four predictors explained 68% of the variance in divorce intention.

**Conclusion:** Divorce intention appears to reflect the combined influence of attachment-related vulnerability, negative marital appraisal, emotional disconnection, and weakened commitment; accordingly, interventions addressing marital instability may benefit from targeting these interconnected relational processes.

***Keywords:*** *Divorce intention; attachment insecurity; marital disillusionment; emotional loneliness; relationship commitment.*

## 1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most consequential interpersonal relationships in adulthood and represents a social, emotional, and psychological bond through which individuals seek intimacy, security, companionship, mutual support, and continuity of family life. Nevertheless, marital relationships vary substantially in their capacity to maintain these functions over time. For some couples, accumulated interpersonal strains, unmet expectations, recurrent conflict, emotional disengagement, and deterioration in intimacy gradually transform the marital relationship from a source of security into a context of chronic psychological distress. Divorce intention may emerge during this process as a cognitive and motivational orientation toward terminating the marital bond. Although an intention to divorce does not necessarily result in legal dissolution, persistent thoughts of separation, discussions about ending the relationship, and consideration of concrete steps toward divorce indicate substantial deterioration in marital stability. Contemporary research increasingly emphasizes that marital instability cannot be explained adequately by isolated disagreements or demographic characteristics; rather, it reflects interacting intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that shape how spouses perceive, regulate, and respond to relational experiences. Studies of marital dissatisfaction have similarly demonstrated that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are embedded in complex relational meanings and patterns rather than being simple opposites on a single continuum (Malm et al., 2022).

One particularly important framework for understanding vulnerability within intimate relationships is adult attachment theory. Attachment orientations influence the way individuals evaluate relationship threats, seek proximity, interpret a partner's availability, regulate distress, and maintain emotional connection during relational challenges. Attachment insecurity generally encompasses attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Individuals characterized by attachment anxiety may experience heightened fear of abandonment, excessive need for reassurance, sensitivity to signs of rejection, and hyperactivation of attachment-related concerns, whereas avoidantly attached individuals tend to inhibit dependency needs, maintain emotional distance, and disengage when intimacy becomes psychologically threatening. Research involving married adults indicates that romantic attachment is closely connected with the quality and satisfaction of marital relationships (Hasim et al., 2023). Similarly, attachment styles have been identified as important psychological determinants of marital stability because secure attachment can facilitate trust, constructive communication, and relational resilience, whereas insecure attachment can heighten conflict and instability (Okonkwo, 2024). The association is also evident before and outside formal marriage, as relationship duration and quality are systematically related to attachment insecurity among romantic couples (Freeman et al., 2023).

Attachment insecurity may contribute to divorce intention through several psychological mechanisms. Anxiously attached individuals may interpret ambiguous relational events as indications that their spouse is becoming unavailable or rejecting, increasing emotional reactivity and recurrent conflict. Avoidantly attached individuals, in contrast, may deactivate attachment needs and progressively withdraw from relational interaction, thereby undermining intimacy and collaborative problem solving. Relational perceptions can nevertheless alter these associations. Positive perceptions of a partner's ability to understand one's perspective, for example, may buffer the detrimental relationship between attachment insecurity and marital satisfaction (Rigby & Cobb, 2022). Attachment-oriented experiences may also be responsive to therapeutic intervention. Narrative attachment-based therapy has been associated with improvements in emotional experiences toward one's spouse and family functioning among married women, supporting the relevance of attachment processes to modifiable aspects of marital functioning (Geravandi et al., 2023). At the same time, attachment orientations are partly rooted in earlier relational environments. Evidence concerning the intergenerational transmission of partnership patterns suggests that parental and family relationship experiences may influence later romantic functioning (Shmakova, 2023), while interparental conflict has been linked to adult relational attitudes through attachment orientations (Tolmacz et al., 2022).

Attachment insecurity is also relevant to the experience of loneliness. Emotional loneliness does not merely refer to the objective absence of social contacts; it concerns a perceived lack of sufficiently intimate, responsive, and emotionally satisfying relational connection. A person can therefore be legally married, live with a spouse, and maintain routine interaction while experiencing pronounced emotional loneliness. Research among young adults has demonstrated meaningful relationships between attachment styles and loneliness levels (G. & R., 2024). Within


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marriage, insecure attachment may impair the ability to seek and receive emotional support effectively, resulting in a paradoxical condition in which the attachment figure is physically present but experienced as psychologically unavailable. For anxiously attached spouses, loneliness may arise from persistent uncertainty about whether the partner is sufficiently responsive or committed. For avoidant spouses, habitual suppression of closeness needs and restricted emotional disclosure can limit opportunities for mutual understanding. Emotional loneliness may therefore operate not merely as an individual affective state but as an indicator of impaired dyadic connection.

The significance of emotional loneliness becomes especially evident when it develops alongside emotional separation within an intact marriage. Emotional divorce can precede formal divorce and is characterized by progressive psychological disengagement, diminished emotional exchange, reduced mutual investment, and the erosion of a sense of shared relational identity. Qualitative evidence concerning the emotional divorce process emphasizes that marital dissolution may develop through a gradual sequence of emotional experiences and relational transformations rather than through a single precipitating event (Ajri-Khameslou et al., 2026). Likewise, loneliness and emotional divorce have been identified as predictors of marital burnout, illustrating how the subjective loss of emotional connection can undermine marital vitality even when the legal relationship remains intact (Zardini et al., 2021). Clinical observations also suggest that unexpressed emotional and intimacy-related distress within intimate relationships can become deeply embodied and may appear through broader psychological or psychosomatic complaints (Raja, 2026). Accordingly, emotional loneliness may be a proximal marker of relational disconnection that contributes directly to thoughts of separation.

A second major process relevant to divorce intention is marital disillusionment. Romantic relationships frequently begin with idealized beliefs about the partner, the marriage, and the capacity of intimate commitment to satisfy enduring emotional needs. Disillusionment develops when repeated experiences increasingly conflict with these expectations, causing the individual to question earlier assumptions about the spouse or the relationship. Marital disillusionment is distinct from transient dissatisfaction because it involves deterioration in the meanings, expectations, and beliefs that previously sustained commitment to the relationship. A spouse experiencing disillusionment may conclude not merely that the marriage currently contains problems but that the marriage has fundamentally failed to become what was expected. Such perceptions can be intensified when distress is repetitive and unresolved. Recent evidence concerning women experiencing relationship obsessive-compulsive difficulties, for example, highlights the substantial harm that persistent relationship-centered doubts and preoccupations can generate in marital functioning (Zarifi et al., 2026). Relationship-related obsessive-compulsive symptoms have also been connected with marital instability, including pathways involving tendencies toward infidelity (Genç & Büyükada, 2026). These findings illustrate how persistent negative appraisal of the relationship can threaten perceived marital continuity.

Marital disillusionment is theoretically likely to have a particularly strong association with divorce intention because it alters expectations regarding the future of the marriage. Couples can remain committed through episodes of dissatisfaction when they believe that difficulties are temporary or solvable. Disillusionment, however, weakens that belief by redefining distress as evidence that the relationship itself no longer corresponds with the individual's fundamental expectations. Contemporary strength-and-strain approaches to romantic relationships similarly emphasize that relational functioning reflects the balance between resources that sustain relationships and pressures that undermine them (Adhikari & Shilpa, 2025). Modern relational strains may include interpersonal processes that did not occupy the same role in earlier generations. Partner phubbing, for instance, has been associated with a range of relational antecedents and negative consequences, demonstrating how technology-mediated inattention can interfere with perceived responsiveness and relationship quality (Ni et al., 2025). Over time, such seemingly ordinary experiences may contribute to the accumulation of disappointment and emotional distancing.

The destabilization of marriage can also be accelerated by breaches of exclusivity and trust. Infidelity represents a particularly consequential relational stressor because it challenges attachment security, emotional intimacy, perceived uniqueness of the bond, and confidence in future commitment. Research identifies diverse psychological and emotional factors associated with relationship infidelity (Shrestha et al., 2023), while broader analyses emphasize substantial consequences of infidelity for love and intimate relationships (Rokach & Chan, 2023). Individual factors such as emotional intelligence and narcissistic personality characteristics have also been studied in relation to marital


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infidelity (Ogwuche et al., 2024). Qualitative investigation of men's online extramarital relationships further indicates that extramarital involvement is embedded in contextual and relational conditions rather than being reducible to isolated individual choices (Hajizadeh et al., 2024). Such experiences can contribute to disappointment, loneliness, and diminished commitment and thus may illuminate some of the broader relational processes through which divorce intention develops.

At the same time, research on therapeutic responses to infidelity suggests that severely strained marriages do not inevitably proceed toward dissolution. Emotion-focused couple therapy has demonstrated beneficial effects on intimacy, marital adjustment, and forgiveness among couples with histories of extramarital affairs (Torani & Fard, 2024). Acceptance and commitment-based couple therapy has likewise been used to improve attitudes toward marital infidelity and emotional regulation among married women (Yousefpouri et al., 2024). Reviews incorporating spirituality and cognitive-behavioral approaches further highlight intervention strategies for couples affected by extramarital infidelity (Yousefi et al., 2023). These findings are relevant because they indicate that the processes underlying divorce intention are potentially modifiable. They also reinforce the importance of studying divorce intention through variables representing emotional connection, internal working models, cognitive evaluations of the marriage, and sustained commitment rather than assuming that intentions to divorce arise exclusively from severe overt conflict.

Relationship commitment represents another central determinant of marital stability and provides a theoretically important counterweight to relational strain. Commitment involves a psychological orientation toward maintaining a relationship over time, identifying with its long-term future, and sustaining the bond despite short-term fluctuations in satisfaction. Commitment can inhibit relationship termination even when couples encounter stress because highly committed individuals generally attach greater significance to relationship continuity, accommodate partner shortcomings more readily, and perceive their personal future as interconnected with that of their spouse. Research examining marital flourishing indicates that simply remaining married is not equivalent to experiencing a thriving marriage; adult attachment and marital commitment both contribute meaningfully to the quality of marital functioning (Kusumawardhani et al., 2024). This distinction is important for divorce research because the absence of legal separation cannot automatically be interpreted as strong relational commitment.

Commitment may also shape how relational stress is interpreted. When commitment is strong, partners may view conflict as a shared challenge requiring resolution rather than as evidence that separation is necessary. Conversely, when commitment deteriorates, difficulties that were previously tolerated may acquire greater significance, and alternatives to the marriage may become more psychologically salient. Reconciliation-oriented couple therapy research demonstrates that commitment-related processes can be strengthened through structured intervention. A systematic review of Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy for marital reconciliation has documented its relevance to improving relationship outcomes among distressed couples (Talib et al., 2025). Similarly, marriage enrichment interventions have been associated with greater marital intimacy and psychological security (Tavaloli et al., 2022). These findings support the proposition that relational commitment and the psychological conditions supporting it constitute important protective factors against marital dissolution.

Divorce intention nevertheless occurs within a broader network of personal, interpersonal, cultural, sexual, and value-related variables. Research among Muslim couples has connected divorce intention with variables including religious beliefs, sexual dysfunction, and other psychosocial factors (Ramírez-Coronel et al., 2023). Such findings demonstrate that divorce consideration is multidetermined and may arise when multiple sources of strain converge. Attachment insecurity may heighten sensitivity to rejection; marital disillusionment may reduce optimism regarding the future; emotional loneliness may indicate the subjective loss of companionship; and low relationship commitment may reduce the psychological forces favoring persistence. These constructs are conceptually distinct yet dynamically related. A spouse with attachment insecurity, for example, may be more susceptible to interpreting relational setbacks as threatening, which may increase loneliness or disillusionment. Similarly, a disillusioned spouse may gradually withdraw emotional investment, while a spouse experiencing loneliness may begin questioning whether continued commitment remains worthwhile. Examining these variables simultaneously is therefore more informative than testing separate bivariate associations.

The transition from marital strain to actual or contemplated dissolution also has implications after separation. Psychological adjustment following divorce is heterogeneous, and attachment insecurity and emotion-


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regulation difficulties have been associated with distinct profiles of post-separation adjustment (Guzmán-González et al., 2025). This suggests that attachment processes remain consequential not only while marriages are intact but also after relationships end. The implication for prevention is that identifying psychological configurations associated with divorce intention before legal dissolution may help clinicians recognize relationships approaching critical instability. Rather than treating divorce intention as a simple outcome of dissatisfaction, it can be conceptualized as the product of a structural system in which dispositional vulnerability, relationship appraisal, emotional connection, and commitment operate concurrently.

Covariance-based structural equation modeling is particularly appropriate for evaluating such a framework because the principal constructs in this model are latent psychological variables that cannot be represented without measurement error. CB-SEM enables simultaneous examination of the measurement model and the hypothesized structural relations among attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, relationship commitment, and divorce intention. It also makes it possible to determine whether each predictor explains unique variance in divorce intention after accounting for correlations among the remaining relational constructs. Despite the growing evidence on attachment and marital stability, loneliness, marital dissatisfaction, infidelity, emotional divorce, and relationship commitment, relatively limited research has integrated these specific constructs within a single latent-variable model of divorce intention. The proposed model therefore integrates vulnerability and protective processes and provides a more comprehensive explanation of the psychological architecture underlying contemplation of marital dissolution. Accordingly, the present study aimed to test a covariance-based structural equation model of divorce intention based on attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment among married adults in Canada.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### *2.1. Study Design and Participants*

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational design using covariance-based structural equation modeling to examine the structural relationships of attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment with divorce intention. The study population consisted of legally married adults residing in Canada during 2026. Participants were recruited through online community advertisements, family and relationship forums, community organizations, and electronic announcements distributed across Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta. Eligibility criteria were being at least 21 years of age, currently legally married, having lived with the current spouse for at least one year, residing in Canada for at least two years, having adequate English-language proficiency to complete the questionnaires, and providing informed consent. Participants who were legally separated at the time of assessment, were currently undergoing formal divorce proceedings, or submitted substantially incomplete questionnaires were excluded because the outcome of interest concerned divorce intention within an intact marriage rather than behavior after separation. An initial 451 individuals entered the survey. Sixteen records were excluded because more than 10% of questionnaire responses were missing, and seven cases were excluded after examination of multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance at $p < .001$, resulting in a final analytic sample of 428 married adults. Of the final participants, 226 (52.8%) were women and 202 (47.2%) were men. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 62 years, with a mean age of 39.64 years (SD = 8.71). Mean duration of marriage was 11.36 years (SD = 7.29), ranging from 1 to 36 years. Regarding geographical distribution, 171 participants (40.0%) lived in Ontario, 86 (20.1%) in Quebec, 89 (20.8%) in British Columbia, and 82 (19.2%) in Alberta. A total of 84 participants (19.6%) had completed high school or vocational education, 194 (45.3%) held a bachelor's degree, and 150 (35.0%) held a master's degree or doctorate. Two hundred and ninety-six participants (69.2%) reported having at least one child, whereas 132 (30.8%) reported having no children. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Before accessing the questionnaires, all participants viewed an electronic information sheet describing the objectives of the research, confidentiality procedures, their right to discontinue participation without penalty, and the approximate survey duration, after which electronic informed consent was obtained. No identifying information was included in the analytic database.

### *2.2. Measures*

Attachment insecurity was assessed using the Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised questionnaire


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developed by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan in 2000. The ECR-R is a 36-item self-report instrument designed to assess adult romantic attachment across two continuous dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Each dimension contains 18 items, and respondents rate statements concerning their experiences in close romantic relationships on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Attachment anxiety reflects fears concerning rejection, abandonment, and insufficient partner availability, whereas attachment avoidance reflects discomfort with closeness, dependency, emotional disclosure, and reliance on a partner. Negatively keyed items are reverse scored before subscale scores are calculated, and higher scores indicate greater attachment insecurity. The two first-order dimensions were specified as indicators of a higher-order attachment insecurity construct in the structural model. To reduce model complexity while retaining multidimensional information, balanced item parcels were generated separately within anxiety and avoidance after confirmation of the original two-factor measurement structure. The ECR-R has demonstrated strong psychometric characteristics across studies and is extensively used in research on romantic attachment. The 36-item composition and two-dimensional anxiety/avoidance structure correspond to the published specification of the ECR-R. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .91 for attachment anxiety, .89 for attachment avoidance, and .92 for the overall attachment insecurity construct.

Marital disillusionment was measured using the Marital Disillusionment Scale developed by Niehuis and Bartell in 2006. The instrument assesses the degree to which an individual's initially positive or idealized beliefs about marriage and the marital partner have deteriorated as the relationship has developed. The scale contains 11 items scored on a 5-point Likert continuum ranging from 1 (extremely disagree) to 5 (extremely agree). Items address disappointment with the course of the relationship, discrepancies between expected and experienced marriage, and diminished positive evaluations of one's marital bond. After appropriate reverse scoring where required, item responses are averaged or summed so that higher scores indicate greater marital disillusionment. The original instrument has shown a strong unidimensional structure and high internal consistency, and its 11-item, 5-point response format is documented in subsequent applications of the scale. In the present study, three balanced parcels were generated from the 11 items for inclusion as observed indicators of the marital disillusionment latent variable after item-level confirmatory factor analysis supported unidimensionality. Cronbach's alpha for the scale in the current sample was .94.

Emotional loneliness within the marital relationship was measured using the romantic loneliness component of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults–Short Form developed by DiTommaso and colleagues. The complete SELSA-S contains 15 items distributed equally across romantic, family, and social loneliness, with five items representing each domain. The present study used the five-item romantic loneliness dimension because the theoretical model specifically concerned unmet emotional connection within the intimate-partner relationship rather than generalized social isolation. Items are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with positively worded items reverse scored so that higher scores consistently indicate greater loneliness. The romantic component assesses unmet needs for intimate emotional sharing, support, closeness, and a satisfying romantic bond. The SELSA-S has demonstrated acceptable to strong reliability and construct validity, and its three-domain, 15-item structure with five romantic loneliness items has been consistently described in validation research. Cronbach's alpha for romantic emotional loneliness in the present sample was .89.

Relationship commitment was measured with the commitment-level component of the Investment Model Scale developed by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew in 1998. The full Investment Model Scale evaluates satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment level, whereas the present study used the seven global commitment items because relationship commitment was the construct specified in the hypothesized model. Items assess long-term orientation toward the relationship, intention to maintain the relationship, psychological attachment to the partner, and perceived persistence of the relationship into the future. Responses are provided on a 9-point scale, with higher scores reflecting stronger commitment after appropriate scoring. The original instrument was developed to measure the central constructs of the investment model and demonstrated strong internal consistency and construct validity across multiple studies; the broader global-item instrument contains 22 items across its four domains. In the present study, the seven commitment items were represented by three balanced parcels in the latent measurement model. Cronbach's alpha for relationship commitment was .91.


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Divorce intention was operationalized using the five-item short form derived from the Marital Instability Index developed by Booth, Johnson, and Edwards. The short form assesses cognitions and behaviors indicating movement toward marital separation, including whether the respondent has perceived the marriage as being in serious trouble, thought about separation or divorce, discussed possible divorce with another person or the spouse, or considered obtaining legal consultation. The original Marital Instability Index was specifically designed to assess instability and proneness to divorce among currently intact married couples, and the abbreviated five-item form has been widely used as an indicator of divorce proneness. In the present study, participants responded using a 4-point frequency format ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (frequently), with higher scores representing stronger divorce intention or proneness toward marital dissolution. The five items were specified as indicators of the latent divorce intention construct. Cronbach's alpha in the present sample was .90.

### *2.3. Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics and AMOS. Preliminary analyses included screening for data-entry errors, missing values, univariate and multivariate outliers, distributional assumptions, and multicollinearity. Records containing more than 10% missing data were excluded, whereas the very small amount of item-level missingness remaining in eligible records was addressed using full-information maximum likelihood during structural equation modeling. Univariate normality was evaluated through skewness and kurtosis, with absolute skewness values below 2 and absolute kurtosis values below 7 considered acceptable for maximum-likelihood estimation. Multivariate normality was additionally examined using Mardia's normalized multivariate kurtosis coefficient. Mahalanobis distance was used to identify multivariate outliers at $p < .001$. Multicollinearity was assessed through tolerance and variance inflation factor statistics. Descriptive statistics consisting of means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated for the principal variables, and internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to describe bivariate relationships among the study constructs.

The CB-SEM analysis followed a two-stage procedure. First, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the adequacy of the measurement model before testing structural relations. Standardized factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted were used to evaluate convergent validity. Factor loadings of at least .50, composite reliability values of .70 or greater, and AVE values of .50 or greater were considered evidence of satisfactory convergent measurement. Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs and by confirming acceptable interconstruct differentiation. After establishment of the measurement model, the hypothesized structural model was estimated using maximum-likelihood estimation. Model fit was evaluated using multiple complementary indices, including the chi-square statistic, chi-square divided by degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df$), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with its 90% confidence interval, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Values of $\chi^2/df$ below 3, CFI, TLI, and IFI values above .90, RMSEA below .08, and SRMR below .08 were considered indicative of acceptable model fit, with values approaching or exceeding more stringent criteria interpreted as evidence of good fit. Standardized structural coefficients ($\beta$), unstandardized coefficients, standard errors, critical ratios, and p values were used to evaluate the hypothesized effects. The proportion of variance explained in divorce intention was evaluated using the squared multiple correlation ($R^2$), and statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$.

## 3. Findings and Results

The final analysis included 428 married adults. Women constituted 52.8% of the sample (n = 226) and men constituted 47.2% (n = 202). The participants had a mean age of 39.64 years (SD = 8.71), and their mean duration of marriage was 11.36 years (SD = 7.29). Regarding educational attainment, 84 participants (19.6%) had completed high school or vocational education, 194 (45.3%) held bachelor's degrees, and 150 (35.0%) had completed graduate-level education. A total of 296 participants (69.2%) had one or more children and 132 (30.8%) had no children. The geographical composition of the sample included 171 respondents from Ontario (40.0%), 86 from Quebec (20.1%), 89 from British Columbia (20.8%), and 82 from Alberta (19.2%). Examination of the data showed no problematic remaining univariate outliers following screening. Absolute skewness values ranged from 0.19 to


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0.68 and absolute kurtosis values ranged from 0.18 to 0.64. Mardia's normalized multivariate kurtosis coefficient was 2.84, supporting the use of maximum-likelihood estimation. Tolerance values ranged from .47 to .66 and variance inflation factors ranged from 1.52 to 2.13, indicating that multicollinearity was not problematic.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics, Distributional Characteristics, and Reliability of the Study Variables*

| Variable | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attachment insecurity | 4.12 | 1.03 | 0.31 | -0.42 | .92 | .93 | .61 |
| Marital disillusionment | 3.16 | 0.83 | 0.28 | -0.37 | .94 | .94 | .59 |
| Emotional loneliness | 3.82 | 1.21 | 0.19 | -0.64 | .89 | .90 | .64 |
| Relationship commitment | 5.06 | 1.08 | -0.41 | -0.23 | .91 | .92 | .62 |
| Divorce intention | 2.07 | 0.76 | 0.68 | 0.18 | .90 | .91 | .67 |

As shown in Table 1, attachment insecurity had a mean of 4.12 (SD = 1.03), whereas mean marital disillusionment was 3.16 (SD = 0.83), emotional loneliness was 3.82 (SD = 1.21), relationship commitment was 5.06 (SD = 1.08), and divorce intention was 2.07 (SD = 0.76). Skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits for all study variables, providing evidence of adequate univariate normality. Internal consistency was high, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .89 for emotional loneliness to .94 for marital disillusionment. Composite reliability coefficients ranged between .90 and .94 and therefore exceeded the recommended threshold of .70. AVE coefficients ranged from .59 to .67, exceeding the .50 criterion for all five latent variables. Collectively, these findings supported the reliability and convergent validity of the measures prior to evaluation of the structural model.

**Table 2**

*Correlations and Discriminant Validity Among the Latent Study Variables*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Attachment insecurity | .78 | | | | |
| 2. Marital disillusionment | .52*** | .77 | | | |
| 3. Emotional loneliness | .46*** | .55*** | .80 | | |
| 4. Relationship commitment | -.48*** | -.64*** | -.53*** | .79 | |
| 5. Divorce intention | .56*** | .68*** | .61*** | -.66*** | .82 |

Table 2 demonstrates statistically significant relationships among all principal variables in theoretically expected directions. Attachment insecurity correlated positively with marital disillusionment ($r = .52$, $p < .001$), emotional loneliness ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), and divorce intention ($r = .56$, $p < .001$), while correlating negatively with relationship commitment ($r = -.48$, $p < .001$). Marital disillusionment showed a relatively strong positive correlation with divorce intention ($r = .68$, $p < .001$) and a strong inverse correlation with relationship commitment ($r = -.64$, $p < .001$). Emotional loneliness was positively associated with divorce intention ($r = .61$, $p < .001$) and negatively related to relationship commitment ($r = -.53$, $p < .001$). Relationship commitment demonstrated a substantial negative correlation with divorce intention ($r = -.66$, $p < .001$). The square root of AVE for each latent construct exceeded its correlations with the other constructs, supporting discriminant validity. Therefore, although the variables were meaningfully related, they represented empirically distinguishable components of marital functioning.

**Table 3**

*Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Measurement and Structural Models*

| Model | $\chi^2$ | df | $\chi^2$/df | GFI | CFI | TLI | IFI | RMSEA (90% CI) | SRMR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measurement model | 566.84 | 289 | 1.96 | .910 | .956 | .949 | .956 | .047 (.041–.053) | .044 |
| Structural model | 584.22 | 293 | 1.99 | .906 | .953 | .947 | .953 | .048 (.042–.054) | .046 |


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The confirmatory measurement model demonstrated good fit to the observed covariance matrix, $\chi^2(289) = 566.84$, $\chi^2/df = 1.96$, GFI = .910, CFI = .956, TLI = .949, IFI = .956, RMSEA = .047, 90% CI [.041, .053], and SRMR = .044. Standardized indicator loadings were statistically significant and ranged from .68 to .89, with no standardized loading below .50. After confirmation of the measurement model, the hypothesized structural paths were estimated. The structural model also demonstrated good fit, $\chi^2(293) = 584.22$, $\chi^2/df = 1.99$, GFI = .906, CFI = .953, TLI = .947, IFI = .953, RMSEA = .048, 90% CI [.042, .054], and SRMR = .046. The minimal decline in incremental fit indices between the measurement and structural models indicated that specification of the directional structural relations did not produce meaningful deterioration in model fit. Consequently, the hypothesized structural configuration was retained for interpretation.

**Table 4**

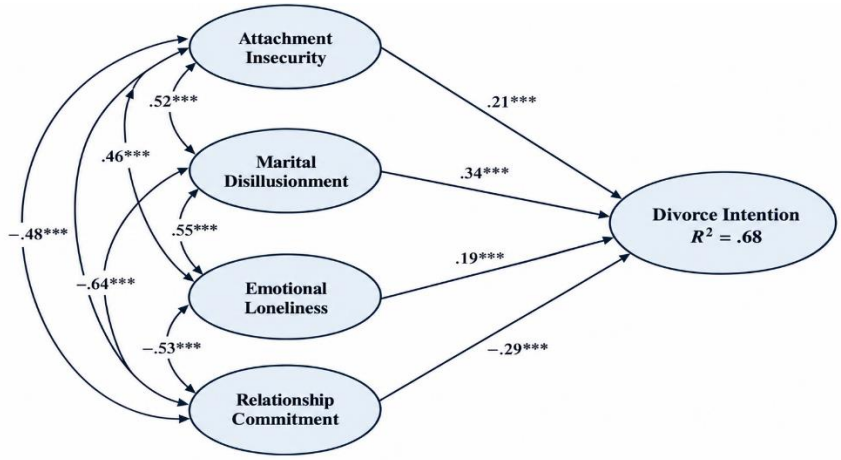
*Structural Effects of Attachment Insecurity, Marital Disillusionment, Emotional Loneliness, and Relationship Commitment on Divorce Intention*

| Structural path | B | SE | β | CR | p | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attachment insecurity → Divorce intention | 0.16 | 0.03 | .21 | 4.78 | <.001 | Supported |
| Marital disillusionment → Divorce intention | 0.31 | 0.05 | .34 | 6.83 | <.001 | Supported |
| Emotional loneliness → Divorce intention | 0.12 | 0.03 | .19 | 4.51 | <.001 | Supported |
| Relationship commitment → Divorce intention | -0.23 | 0.04 | -.29 | -6.12 | <.001 | Supported |

As presented in Table 4, all four hypothesized structural effects were statistically significant after their shared covariance was simultaneously controlled. Attachment insecurity exerted a positive direct effect on divorce intention (β = .21, CR = 4.78, p < .001), indicating that greater anxiety and avoidance in adult romantic attachment were associated with stronger contemplation of marital dissolution. Marital disillusionment had the strongest positive standardized effect on divorce intention (β = .34, CR = 6.83, p < .001), demonstrating that deterioration in positive beliefs and expectations about the marriage represented a particularly important risk factor. Emotional loneliness also exerted a significant positive effect (β = .19, CR = 4.51, p < .001), indicating that unmet needs for intimate emotional connection predicted greater divorce intention independently of the other constructs. In contrast, relationship commitment had a significant negative effect on divorce intention (β = -.29, CR = -6.12, p < .001), demonstrating its protective structural role. Together, attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment explained 68% of the variance in divorce intention, representing substantial explanatory power for the proposed model.

**Figure 1**

*Standardized Covariance-Based Structural Equation Model*





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The final structural model indicated that divorce intention resulted from the simultaneous contribution of both vulnerability and protective relational processes. Marital disillusionment showed the largest positive direct path to divorce intention (β = .34), followed by attachment insecurity (β = .21) and emotional loneliness (β = .19), whereas relationship commitment showed a substantial inverse path (β = -.29). The structural pattern indicates that thoughts and behavioral orientations toward divorce were greatest among individuals who simultaneously experienced insecure attachment, disappointment with the marriage, and emotional disconnection and who reported weaker psychological commitment to preserving the relationship. The explained variance of $R^2$ = .68 further indicated that the four-predictor latent model accounted for more than two thirds of individual differences in divorce intention within the sample.

## 4. Discussion

The present study examined a covariance-based structural equation model of divorce intention based on attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment among married adults in Canada. The overall model demonstrated good measurement and structural fit, and each hypothesized path was statistically significant. Specifically, attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, and emotional loneliness were associated with greater divorce intention, whereas relationship commitment was associated with lower divorce intention. Marital disillusionment emerged as the strongest positive predictor, followed by attachment insecurity and emotional loneliness, while relationship commitment had a substantial protective association. Collectively, these variables explained 68% of the variance in divorce intention. The findings therefore suggest that contemplation of divorce is not attributable to a single adverse marital experience but instead reflects the convergence of attachment-related vulnerability, deteriorating perceptions of marriage, subjective emotional disconnection, and weakening motivation to maintain the relationship.

The positive structural effect of attachment insecurity on divorce intention is consistent with theoretical perspectives according to which insecure internal working models influence the interpretation and regulation of relational threat. Individuals high in attachment anxiety may remain chronically alert to possible rejection or abandonment, while avoidantly attached individuals may minimize dependence and respond to distress through psychological withdrawal. Both processes can impair the sense that the marital relationship represents a reliable source of emotional safety. Previous research has demonstrated an important association between adult romantic attachment and satisfaction within marriage (Hasim et al., 2023), while attachment styles have been identified as meaningful determinants of marital stability (Okonkwo, 2024). The present results extend those observations by showing that attachment insecurity retained a significant direct relationship with divorce intention even when marital disillusionment, loneliness, and commitment were included simultaneously in the model.

The result also corresponds with evidence showing that attachment insecurity is associated with relationship quality across romantic relationships of different durations (Freeman et al., 2023). Persistent attachment insecurity may create a self-reinforcing relational pattern. Anxiously attached spouses may intensify demands for reassurance when they perceive relational threat, potentially eliciting withdrawal from their partners, whereas avoidantly attached spouses may disengage when emotional demands become intense. Such interactions may gradually weaken mutual responsiveness and increase consideration of relational termination. The finding is also consistent with research indicating that relational perceptions can moderate consequences of insecurity. Positive illusions concerning dyadic perspective-taking can reduce the adverse association between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction (Rigby & Cobb, 2022), suggesting that the impact of insecurity depends partly on whether the partner is perceived as understanding and responsive. Furthermore, the evidence that attachment-focused therapeutic approaches can improve emotional experience toward a spouse (Geravandi et al., 2023) reinforces the view that attachment-linked relational processes remain clinically modifiable rather than representing fixed determinants of marital failure.

The intergenerational basis of attachment processes may further explain their association with divorce intention. Relationship expectations and strategies for managing intimacy can be shaped by earlier family experiences, and previous research has emphasized family and parenting influences in the intergenerational transmission of partnership patterns (Shmakova, 2023). Interparental conflict has likewise been connected with subsequent relational attitudes through attachment orientations (Tolmacz et al., 2022). Individuals entering marriage with insecure attachment representations may therefore bring longstanding assumptions regarding trust, availability,

rejection, or autonomy into the marital system. Under conditions of conflict, these assumptions may become especially salient and promote maladaptive interpretations of a spouse's behavior. The significant attachment insecurity path in the present structural model can consequently be understood as representing a deeper relational vulnerability influencing the way marital experiences are processed.

Marital disillusionment demonstrated the strongest positive effect on divorce intention. This finding is theoretically meaningful because disillusionment involves more than episodic dissatisfaction. It reflects a deterioration in the individual's broader beliefs about the marriage, the partner, and the anticipated future of the relationship. When marital expectations are repeatedly contradicted by lived experience, spouses may gradually reinterpret relationship difficulties as fundamental and enduring rather than temporary and reparable. At this stage, divorce can become cognitively represented as a realistic or desirable alternative. The strong coefficient obtained for marital disillusionment is compatible with research suggesting that relationship-centered obsessive concerns can generate significant psychological and relational harm (Zarifi et al., 2026). Relationship obsessive-compulsive symptoms have also been associated with marital instability through complex relational mechanisms (Genç & Büyükada, 2026). Although disillusionment is conceptually distinct from obsessive relational doubt, both involve sustained negative cognitive appraisal of the intimate relationship, which may progressively destabilize marital continuity.

The prominence of marital disillusionment can also be interpreted using a strength-and-strain perspective. Romantic relationships are sustained when relational resources are sufficient to counterbalance accumulated strain, whereas ongoing negative experiences can progressively reduce confidence in the viability of the bond (Adhikari & Shilpa, 2025). Contemporary forms of relational inattention may contribute to this process. Partner phubbing, for example, has been associated with adverse relationship consequences (Ni et al., 2025). Recurrent experiences of being ignored, emotionally deprioritized, or inadequately responded to may initially appear minor but can become symbolically meaningful over time. When such experiences repeatedly contradict expectations concerning intimacy and mutual concern, they may facilitate the transition from dissatisfaction to disillusionment. The present findings therefore suggest that interventions addressing divorce risk should assess not only current conflict intensity but also whether spouses still believe that their marriage can become fulfilling.

Emotional loneliness also significantly predicted divorce intention independently of attachment insecurity and marital disillusionment. This finding emphasizes the distinction between objective relationship status and subjective emotional connection. An individual may remain married and engage routinely with a spouse while nevertheless experiencing an absence of intimate understanding, emotional responsiveness, or meaningful companionship. The observed positive path is consistent with research demonstrating associations between attachment styles and loneliness (G. & R., 2024). It is also consistent with evidence linking loneliness and emotional divorce with marital burnout (Zardini et al., 2021). When spouses repeatedly experience their emotional needs as unmet, the marital relationship may cease to function as a psychologically meaningful source of belonging. Divorce intention may consequently emerge not only as an attempt to escape conflict but also as a response to persistent emotional deprivation.

This interpretation is reinforced by qualitative descriptions of emotional divorce as a developmental relational process. Emotional separation may gradually precede formal dissolution as partners reduce emotional disclosure, shared meaning, intimacy, and psychological investment (Ajri-Khameslou et al., 2026). The current structural association between emotional loneliness and divorce intention may therefore reflect one psychological stage within that progression. Clinical descriptions of concealed intimacy-related distress likewise indicate that unmet emotional and relational needs can manifest through extensive psychological and somatic suffering (Raja, 2026). Emotional loneliness should consequently not be considered a peripheral symptom of marital dissatisfaction. Rather, it may represent a central indicator that the attachment bond is no longer providing sufficient emotional connection to sustain a sense of relational security.

Relationship commitment demonstrated a strong negative effect on divorce intention. This finding supports models in which commitment functions as a psychological force favoring persistence and long-term orientation. Strongly committed spouses are more likely to integrate the relationship into their future identity, tolerate temporary dissatisfaction, and remain motivated to repair difficulties rather than terminate the bond. Research has similarly shown that remaining married alone does not constitute marital flourishing and that commitment and attachment quality


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contribute to more meaningful indices of marital well-being (Kusumawardhani et al., 2024). The present findings add that commitment retains a substantial inverse association with divorce intention even when three major relational risk factors are statistically controlled. Thus, commitment appears to represent more than the absence of distress; it is an independent relational resource protecting against movement toward marital dissolution.

The protective role of commitment is also compatible with evidence from couple interventions. A systematic review of Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy indicates that structured couple-based treatment can support marital reconciliation and relational improvement (Talib et al., 2025). Marriage enrichment interventions have likewise been associated with improvement in intimacy and psychological security (Tavaloli et al., 2022). These findings suggest that commitment should not be conceptualized as static. When partners regain emotional safety, responsiveness, intimacy, and a shared sense of future direction, commitment may increase even after substantial marital strain. Clinically, therefore, low commitment may represent both a warning indicator of divorce risk and a potentially modifiable target of intervention.

The correlations among disillusionment, loneliness, commitment, and divorce intention also indicate that these dimensions should be understood as parts of an interconnected marital system. The strong negative relationship between marital disillusionment and commitment suggests that progressive disappointment in the marriage may erode motivation to preserve the relationship. Similarly, emotional loneliness was inversely associated with commitment, indicating that individuals who no longer experience adequate emotional connection may have greater difficulty maintaining a long-term psychological investment in the marriage. However, discriminant validity analyses demonstrated that these constructs were not interchangeable. A spouse may remain highly committed despite loneliness, may experience disappointment while maintaining emotional connection, or may exhibit insecure attachment without immediately considering divorce. The significance of the structural model lies precisely in demonstrating the unique contribution of each component when the others are held constant.

The findings can also be situated within research on marital boundary violations such as infidelity. Infidelity has complex emotional antecedents and consequences (Shrestha et al., 2023), and broader research demonstrates its substantial implications for love and intimate relationships (Rokach & Chan, 2023). Emotional intelligence and narcissistic traits have also been examined as predictors of marital infidelity (Ogwuche et al., 2024), whereas contextual factors shape involvement in online extramarital relationships (Hajizadeh et al., 2024). Such behaviors may intensify each construct included in the present model by increasing attachment threat, deepening disillusionment, producing loneliness, and reducing commitment. Importantly, however, the current model does not imply that infidelity is necessary for divorce intention to emerge. The same psychological configuration may develop gradually through recurrent nonresponsive interaction, unresolved conflict, reduced intimacy, or incompatible expectations.

Previous intervention studies further demonstrate that serious relational injuries do not inevitably result in divorce. Emotion-focused couple therapy has improved intimacy, marital adjustment, and forgiveness among couples with histories of extramarital affairs (Torani & Fard, 2024). Acceptance and commitment-based couple therapy has also shown beneficial effects on infidelity-related attitudes and emotional regulation (Yousefpouri et al., 2024), and cognitive-behavioral and spirituality-enhanced approaches have been discussed as relevant interventions following infidelity (Yousefi et al., 2023). These findings provide an important clinical interpretation of the current model. Even when attachment insecurity, disillusionment, loneliness, or low commitment is evident, these variables can potentially be addressed through systematic relational intervention before divorce intention progresses toward irreversible behavioral action.

The broader psychosocial literature also indicates that divorce intention should not be interpreted exclusively through relationship quality. Religious beliefs, sexual functioning, and other psychosocial characteristics have been associated with intention to divorce (Ramírez-Coronel et al., 2023). Similarly, qualitative and quantitative evidence on marital satisfaction suggests that perceived quality of married life is shaped by social and contextual expectations in addition to dyadic experiences (Malm et al., 2022). The present model therefore explains an important psychological portion of divorce intention but should be understood as embedded within wider cultural, economic, family, sexual, and value systems. This consideration is especially relevant in a Canadian context characterized by cultural diversity and substantial variability in norms surrounding marriage, gender roles, family obligations, individual autonomy, and divorce.



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Finally, the explanatory power of the model is noteworthy. Attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment jointly accounted for 68% of the variance in divorce intention, suggesting that these relational constructs capture a substantial portion of the psychological processes associated with consideration of marital dissolution. The result is also relevant in light of evidence concerning adjustment after separation. Attachment insecurity and emotion-regulation difficulties have been associated with different patterns of psychological adaptation following divorce and separation (Guzmán-González et al., 2025). Identifying high-risk relational configurations while a marriage remains intact may therefore be useful not only for preventing unwanted marital dissolution but also for recognizing individuals who may face substantial psychological vulnerability if separation subsequently occurs.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings support a multidimensional structural explanation of divorce intention in which attachment-related vulnerability, negative cognitive appraisal of marriage, emotional disconnection, and reduced relational persistence operate simultaneously. Marital disillusionment emerged as the strongest positive predictor of divorce intention, attachment insecurity and emotional loneliness contributed additional independent risk, and relationship commitment represented a substantial protective factor. The good fit of the covariance-based structural model and the high proportion of explained variance indicate that divorce intention is most effectively understood through the combined operation of these distinct but interconnected relational processes. Assessment of marital instability should therefore extend beyond overt conflict and include spouses' attachment security, evolving expectations about marriage, subjective emotional connection, and commitment to the long-term continuation of the relationship.

## 6. Limitations & Suggestions

A principal limitation of the study was its cross-sectional design, which prevented causal conclusions or determination of the temporal sequence among attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, relationship commitment, and divorce intention. All variables were assessed through self-report measures, making the findings potentially susceptible to shared-method variance, recall bias, and socially desirable responding. Only one member of each marriage was assessed, and therefore the study could not evaluate actor and partner effects or discrepancies between spouses' perceptions. Although participants were recruited from several Canadian provinces, the sampling procedure was nonprobability based and required adequate English proficiency, potentially limiting generalizability to the entire Canadian married population. The model also did not incorporate socioeconomic stress, relationship violence, sexual satisfaction, mental health, cultural background, remarriage status, or actual subsequent divorce behavior.

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs in which attachment processes, marital disillusionment, loneliness, commitment, and divorce intention are assessed across multiple time points to determine the direction and developmental sequencing of effects. Dyadic data from both spouses would permit actor–partner interdependence modeling and clarify how one partner's insecurity, loneliness, or commitment influences the other partner's divorce intention. Future studies could also compare first marriages with remarriages, marriages of different durations, parents and nonparents, and culturally diverse groups. Testing mediating pathways may determine whether marital disillusionment and emotional loneliness transmit part of the effect of attachment insecurity to divorce intention, while moderation analyses could examine whether commitment buffers the consequences of insecurity or loneliness. Prospective research linking current intentions to later separation or legal divorce would provide particularly strong evidence of predictive validity.

In practice, couple therapists and family counselors should assess attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and commitment when working with couples reporting recurrent divorce thoughts or marital instability. Intervention should not focus solely on reducing overt conflict; it should also help partners identify attachment fears, increase accessible and responsive emotional interaction, reconstruct unrealistic or deteriorated marital expectations, restore meaningful emotional connection, and clarify commitment to the future of the relationship. Screening for disillusionment and loneliness may help identify couples whose marriages appear behaviorally intact but are undergoing substantial psychological disengagement. Where reconciliation is mutually desired and the relationship is safe, attachment-focused, emotion-focused, behavioral, and acceptance-based couple interventions may be organized around strengthening emotional responsiveness and rebuilding a credible shared future.


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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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## Authors' Contributions

All authors have equally contributed 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.

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