




The Structural Model of Marital Conflicts Based on Gender Stereotypes and Emotional Needs with the Mediation of Coping Styles

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to determine the fit of the model of marital conflicts based on gender stereotypes and emotional needs with the mediation of coping styles.

Methods and Materials: This research was applied in terms of its objective and correlational in terms of its methodology, specifically using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all couples experiencing marital conflicts who sought counseling services in Tehran. From this population, a total of 500 individuals were purposefully selected through voluntary sampling as the study sample. The participants responded to the Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ), Bem Sex Role Inventory (1982), Young-Rigg Escape Questionnaire (1994), and Primary Emotional Needs Questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using Pearson correlation regression and structural equation modeling via PLS software.

Findings: The study's findings indicated that among the gender roles, only the neutral gender role had a significant direct effect on marital conflicts with a standardized beta coefficient of -0.229. The feminine and masculine gender roles did not have significant direct effects on marital conflicts. Emotional needs, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.069, did not have a significant direct effect on marital conflicts. The feminine, masculine, and neutral gender roles did not have significant indirect effects on marital conflicts through the mediation of avoidance and overcompensation coping strategies. Emotional needs had an indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of avoidance coping strategies, with a standardized coefficient of 0.037. Emotional needs also had a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of overcompensation coping strategies, with a standardized coefficient of 0.030.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the neutral gender role has a significant and direct effect on reducing marital conflicts, while femininity and masculinity

roles do not have a direct impact. Emotional needs did not show a significant direct influence on marital conflicts, but they do contribute indirectly through avoidance and overcompensation coping strategies, which in turn can exacerbate conflicts. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender roles and coping strategies in addressing marital conflicts, suggesting that interventions should focus on these factors to enhance marital satisfaction and stability.

Keywords: *Marital Conflicts, Gender Stereotypes, Emotional Needs, Coping Styles.*

1. Introduction

The family is recognized as the most important unit of society, and marriage is the most fundamental human relationship, as it forms the primary structure of family relationships and the development of subsequent generations (Mohammadi et al., 2021). The family unit is based on love and is a center of affection; however, marriage is not always ideal, and under certain circumstances, life for couples can become nearly impossible (Thornes & Collard, 2023). Marital conflict is often observed among couples who are unable to meet each other's basic needs and marital expectations and who lack sufficient skills (Munsch, 2018; Ponzetti & Cate, 2021). In other words, romantic relationships can face stress and conflicts. Conflict, as one of the main challenges in couples' relationships, refers to disagreement, incompatibility, and discord arising from divergent interests, differing goals, and varying perceptions (Lotfi et al., 2020).

Conflict in marital life can undermine the foundation of the family and lay the groundwork for divorce and separation (Halford & Pepping, 2019). Such conflicts are one of the common problems between husbands and wives, which stem from the mismatch between the couple's desires and expectations (Panah Azadeh et al., 2020) and differences in irresponsible behaviors towards marital relationships and marriage (Jafari Manesh et al., 2021). The increase in marital conflict can result in physical illnesses, reduced relationship satisfaction (Park & Park, 2019), high levels of depression and low self-esteem in children (Yeon & Choi, 2020), and the emergence of depressive symptoms in couples (Trombello et al., 2019).

Basic emotional needs require mental health in individuals (Young, 1995). On the other hand, fulfilling the basic needs of couples is effective in reducing marital conflicts (Ghasemi Moghaddam et al., 2020). Moreover, early maladaptive schemas and therapeutic efforts aim to reasonably satisfy emotional needs. Establishing stable psychological communication between couples is necessary to achieve emotional needs, which are formed in childhood and extend to married life (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

Besides emotional and intimate relationships, couples also need autonomy to satisfy their emotional needs. One of the features influenced by societal culture is gender stereotypes.

Some psychological studies have shown that gender stereotypes and gender expectations may lead to marital conflicts (Rahimi Ahmadabadi et al., 2020). Gender stereotypes are limiting beliefs or thoughts that influence an individual's behaviors, roles, and abilities based on their gender (Zeraat Pisheh et al., 2020). These stereotypes may be inaccurately and superficially interpreted regarding an individual's gender and gender roles in society. Gender stereotypes reflect collective beliefs and perceptions about the roles of men and women in society. While these stereotypes may be based on biological and physiological differences between men and women, many of them are shaped by culture, history, and societal propaganda (Rahimi Ahmadabadi et al., 2020). In this context, Chodorow (2012) defines gender stereotypes as "cultural perceptions and expectations about how men and women should behave and perform." She believes that these cultural perceptions and expectations can lead to the promotion and reinforcement of gender inequality in society (Chodorow, 2012). These patterns are formed through social performance and repetition and play a significant role in the formation of sexual identity (Butler, 2020), leading to the imposition of gender restrictions and inequalities (Fisher, 2022). Gender differences influence the choice of coping styles (Arabpour et al., 2018).

Coping styles can have a significant impact on marital relationships. Research findings indicate that coping style has the ability to predict marital conflicts among couples. Coping style or coping strategy refers to the methods and behaviors that individuals use to deal with stress, problems, and life challenges (Nemat Zadeh Getabi et al., 2022). These strategies and behaviors may be used consciously or unconsciously to cope with unpleasant and scattered situations in life. Different coping styles include individual and social methods. Each individual's style significantly impacts life satisfaction, mental and social health, self-confidence, and personal relationships (Algorani & Gupta, 2023). Coping is defined as the cognitive and behavioral

strategies that individuals apply to manage stressful situations, and coping theories are classified based on orientation (situational versus dispositional) and approach (macro versus micro analytical) (Balsamo et al., 2022). Most studies have highlighted three types of coping styles: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant. Problem-focused coping involves concentrating on solving problems and challenges. Individuals using this coping style seek effective and practical solutions to issues. Emotion-focused coping involves managing emotions and focusing on emotional reactions when facing challenges and problems. Individuals using this style tend to focus on self-awareness and emotional regulation. Avoidant coping involves fleeing from or avoiding facing problems and challenges. Individuals using this style tend to escape or ignore issues rather than confront them (Ben-Zur, 2009). Coping styles act as mediators affecting early maladaptive schemas (Moradi et al., 2022). The aim of this study was to determine the fit of the model of marital conflicts based on gender stereotypes and emotional needs with the mediation of coping styles.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This research was applied in terms of its objective and correlational in terms of its methodology, specifically using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all couples experiencing marital conflicts who sought counseling services in Tehran. There is no consensus on the sample size for factor analysis and structural models, but many researchers suggest a minimum sample size of 200 participants (Holter, 1983; Garver & Mentzer, 1999; Sivo et al., 2006; Ho, 2008). Kline also believes that for structural analysis, 10 to 20 samples are needed per parameter, but a minimum sample size of 200 is defensible, and 300 is ideal (Kline, 2010). Therefore, in this study, considering the number of questionnaire components and based on the mentioned sources, a sample size of 500 individuals was considered. The sample was purposefully selected from this population through voluntary sampling. Ethical considerations included the following: Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would not be shared with any other organizations. Informed consent was obtained from the participants for their participation in the study. This research did not incur any financial costs for the participants, and all procedures were conducted free of charge.

To gather information, theoretical foundations and research literature were searched on domestic and international websites based on the research variables. The collected information was summarized, and the first and second chapters of the research were written. For the research's implementation, an introduction letter was obtained from the university with the collaboration of supervisors. The introduction letter was presented to family counseling centers in Tehran, and only couples experiencing marital conflicts and seeking counseling were selected as a purposeful sample. After explaining the research and its procedure, couples who volunteered to participate were selected. Standard questionnaires (Marital Conflict Questionnaire MCQ, Gender Stereotypes, Emotional Needs, and Coping Styles) were provided to the selected participants, and their responses were entered into SPSS24 software for analysis.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ)

This tool is a 54-item questionnaire used to measure marital conflicts. It covers eight main dimensions of marital conflicts: reduced cooperation, reduced sexual relations, increased emotional reactions, increased seeking of support from children, increased individual relationships with relatives, reduced familial relationships with the spouse's relatives and friends, separation of financial matters, and reduced effective communication. Each item is scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. The maximum total score for the questionnaire is 270, and the minimum is 54. A higher score indicates greater conflict and more problems in marital relationships, while a lower score suggests better relationships and less conflict. Items 3, 11, 14, 26, 30, 33, 45, 47, and 54 are scored in reverse. The Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire on a sample of 270 individuals was 0.96, and for the eight subscales, it was as follows: reduced cooperation, 0.81; reduced sexual relations, 0.61; increased emotional reactions, 0.70; increased seeking of support from children, 0.33; increased individual relationships with one's relatives, 0.86; reduced familial relationships with the spouse's relatives and friends, 0.89; separation of financial matters, 0.71; and reduced effective communication, 0.69 (Lotfi et al., 2020; Panah Azadeh et al., 2020). The Marital Conflict Questionnaire possesses good content validity. During the test's content analysis stage, after preliminary implementation and calculating the correlation of each item with the total questionnaire and its

scales, no items were removed due to appropriate correlation.

2.2.2. Gender Stereotype

This inventory, developed by Young in 1994, consists of 41 items and is designed to assess 14 avoidant coping strategies. Responses are rated on a scale from 1 (completely untrue of me) to 6 (completely true of me), with higher scores indicating stronger effects of the avoidance schema in the individual. The escape strategies in this inventory include avoidance through sleeping/lack of energy, distraction by engaging in various activities, deliberate avoidance of thinking about unpleasant matters, substance abuse, excessive control and rationality, suppression of anger, psychosomatic symptoms, denial of illness, withdrawal and isolation from people, denial of memories, self-soothing, eating, shopping, passive inhibition of unpleasant emotions, passive distraction, daydreaming, and avoidance of unpleasant situations. Young reported adequate internal consistency, construct validity, and convergent validity for this inventory in individuals with binge eating disorder. In a study conducted on an Iranian population, Saadati et al. reported a reliability coefficient of 0.79 for this questionnaire, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.23 for the eleven strategies. They also evaluated and confirmed the face and content validity of the Young-Rigg Escape Inventory's binge eating scale and reported an internal consistency of 0.70 (Rahimi Ahmadabadi et al., 2020; Zeraat Pisheh et al., 2020).

2.2.3. Young's Fight Inventory

This inventory, developed by Young in 1995, includes 48 items and is used to assess the coping strategy of overcompensation. Respondents rate each item on a six-point scale (from 1 for "completely untrue of me" to 6 for "completely true of me"). Each item contains various subcomponents, and overcompensation strategies, such as critical behavior, excessive self-reliance, obsessive thinking, excessive optimism, impulsive behaviors, devaluation, and others, are included in the responses. Higher scores indicate the presence of a dominant overcompensation strategy in the individual. Young confirmed the internal consistency and convergent validity of this inventory, reporting an internal reliability coefficient of 0.75 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71. In a study conducted on an Iranian population, the reliability coefficient of this inventory was estimated at 0.78 using the

split-half method, and the face and content validity of this inventory were also confirmed (Moradi et al., 2022).

2.2.4. Primary Emotional Needs Questionnaire

The Primary Emotional Needs Questionnaire is a self-report tool in which participants evaluate themselves on a six-point Likert scale based on the description of each statement. The examiner individually considers each item related to each need, and items that receive high scores (5 to 6) are identified. If two or more statements related to any need receive high scores, that need is considered unmet. This questionnaire, which includes 30 statements and six needs, was developed by the researcher, and based on the findings, the analysis of standardized factor loadings indicated that all components loaded onto a single overall factor. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all primary needs was greater than 0.70. All primary emotional needs were positively and significantly correlated with Young's five schema domains of early maladaptive schemas (Panah Azadeh et al., 2020).

2.2.5. Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)

This inventory was designed by Sandra Bem in 1982 and includes sixty descriptive statements, scored on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Of the sixty traits, twenty are stereotypically feminine, twenty are masculine, and twenty are neutral. Bem (1981) reported the reliability and validity of this test as 99% and 90%, respectively. Mehrazizadeh et al. (2005) calculated the inventory's reliability using Pearson correlation (Zeraat Pisheh et al., 2020). The test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.99 for women and 0.75 for men, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80 for the entire scale.

2.3. Data analysis

The research objectives and procedures were explained to the couples. The analysis was conducted in two sections: descriptive and inferential. In the descriptive section, central tendency and dispersion indices, along with demographic information, were thoroughly examined. In the inferential section, structural equation modeling, Pearson correlation regression, and PLS software were used to test the research hypotheses. This software provides structural equation modeling in a graphical manner.

3. Findings and Results

The majority of the sample consisted of women, accounting for 76.4%, while men made up 23.6%. The majority of participants (46.2%) were over 30 years old. Additionally, 26.4% were aged between 20 to 25 years, 26% were between 25 to 30 years, and the smallest proportion (1.4%) were under 20 years old. The majority of respondents (44%) held an associate or bachelor's degree, 41% had a high

school diploma or less, 11.8% held a master's degree, and 3.2% had a doctoral degree. Most respondents (45%) had been married for more than 10 years, while 17.8% had been married for 1 to 3 years, 13.6% for 5 to 10 years, and the smallest group (10.2%) had been married for 3 to 5 years. The mean and standard deviation of the research variables are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Main Research Variables

Variable	Subscale	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Marital Conflicts	Reduced Effective Communication	14	33	22.27	3.12	0.481	0.324
	Reduced Cooperation	5	22	9.76	3.61	0.703	-0.204
	Reduced Sexual Relations	5	19	7.72	3.04	1.381	1.414
	Increased Emotional Reactions	8	27	13.72	3.22	0.847	0.730
	Increased Individual Relations with Relatives	5	17	8.41	3.01	0.920	0.199
	Reduced Family Relations with Spouse's Relatives	3	14	8.58	2.34	0.907	0.430
	Separation of Financial Matters	7	25	14.58	3.23	0.417	-0.076
	Increased Seeking Support from Children	4	17	7.41	2.67	0.698	-0.014
Total Marital Conflicts	-	62	135	89.48	16.93	0.754	-0.180
Gender Role	Masculinity	21	70	48.50	8.02	-0.126	0.233
	Femininity	15	70	57.84	9.18	-1.174	1.447
	Neutral	21	70	51.39	6.16	-0.418	1.984
Avoidance Strategy	Total Avoidance Strategy	50	235	129.22	23.94	1.168	3.438
Overcompensation Strategy	Total Overcompensation Strategy	47	256	154.05	32.37	-0.068	0.730
Emotional Needs	Total Emotional Needs	36	216	101.70	37.58	0.292	-0.663

One of the most important prerequisites for conducting structural equation modeling is to assess the normality of the research variables. This was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which showed that the main research variables had a significance level of less than 0.05. As a result, it can be stated that the variables do not have a

normal distribution in terms of inferential statistics. Consequently, the partial least squares method using SmartPLS software was utilized for structural equation modeling, as it is not sensitive to the normality of variables and data.

Table 2

Correlation Among Research Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marital Conflicts	1						
Masculinity	-0.105*	1					
Femininity	-0.327**	0.422**	1				
Neutral	-0.216**	0.561**	0.634**	1			
Avoidance Strategy	0.138**	-0.024	-0.148**	-0.057	1		
Overcompensation Strategy	0.343**	0.127**	-0.137**	0.129**	0.138**	1	
Emotional Needs	0.447**	-0.103*	-0.272**	-0.086	0.265**	0.508**	1

**p<0.01

Based on the results obtained from [Figure 1](#), [Table 3](#) summarizes the standardized coefficients along with the significance of the relationship between gender roles and

emotional needs with marital conflicts, including the mediating role of avoidance and overcompensation coping strategies.

Figure 1

Model with Standard Coefficients and p-values

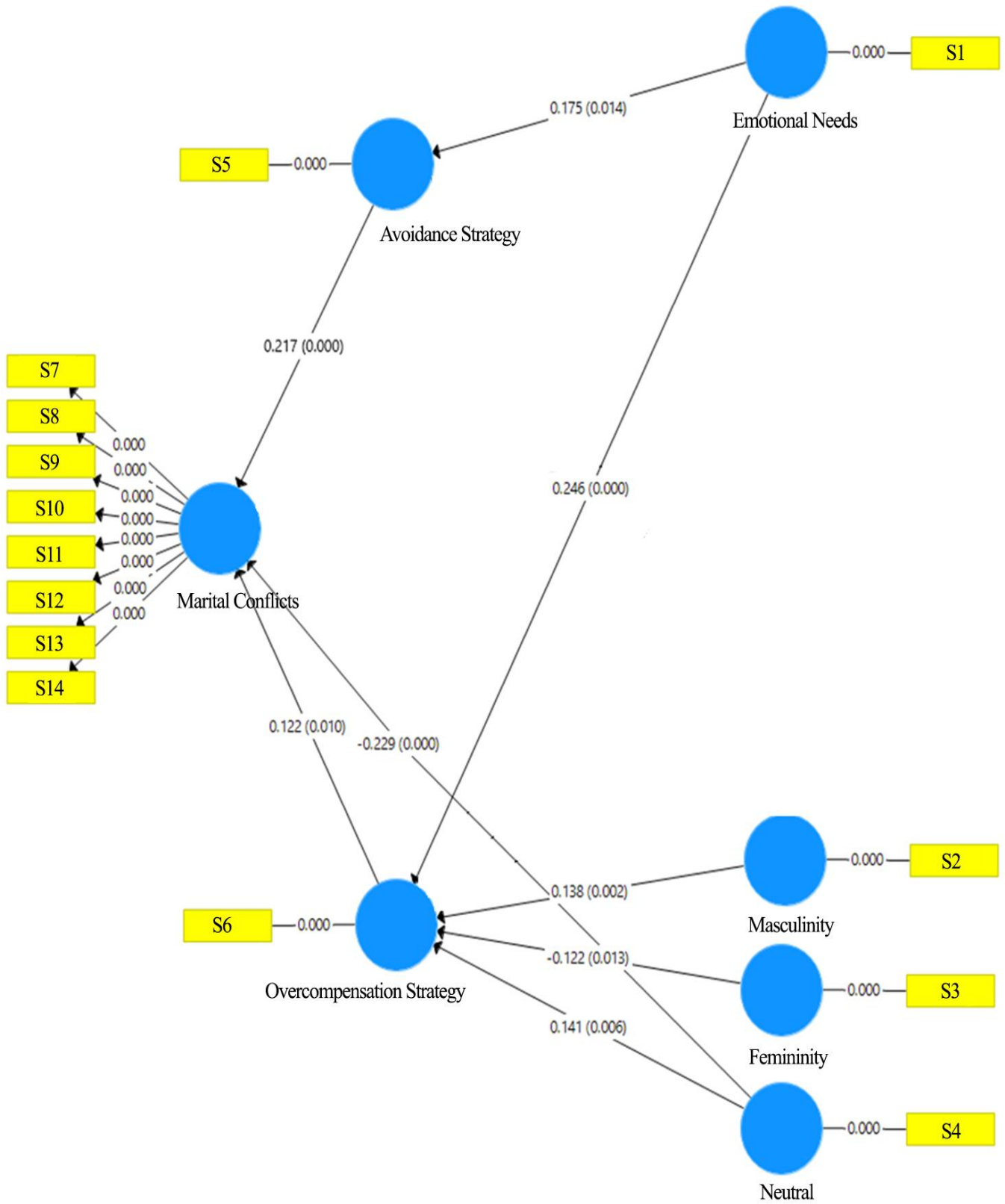


Table 3

Examination of the Path Coefficients of Research Variables

Path Relationship	Standardized Path Coefficient (β)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Result
Avoidance Strategy → Marital Conflicts	0.217	2.651	0.000	Supported
Overcompensation Strategy → Marital Conflicts	0.122	2.571	0.010	Supported
Neutral Gender Role → Marital Conflicts	-0.229	5.325	0.000	Supported
Neutral Gender Role → Overcompensation Strategy	0.141	2.755	0.006	Supported
Femininity Gender Role → Overcompensation Strategy	-0.122	2.491	0.013	Supported
Masculinity Gender Role → Overcompensation Strategy	0.138	3.069	0.002	Supported
Emotional Needs → Avoidance Strategy	0.175	2.463	0.014	Supported
Emotional Needs → Overcompensation Strategy	0.246	3.922	0.000	Supported

Table 4

Examination of the Standardized Indirect Effects Among Research Variables

Path Relationship	Standardized Path Coefficient (β)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Result
Emotional Needs → Marital Conflicts (Mediated by Avoidance Strategy)	0.037	2.317	0.015	Supported
Neutral Gender Role → Marital Conflicts (Mediated by Overcompensation Strategy)	0.017	1.639	0.101	Not Supported
Femininity Gender Role → Marital Conflicts (Mediated by Overcompensation Strategy)	-0.015	1.611	0.107	Not Supported
Masculinity Gender Role → Marital Conflicts (Mediated by Overcompensation Strategy)	0.017	1.899	0.058	Not Supported
Emotional Needs → Marital Conflicts (Mediated by Overcompensation Strategy)	0.030			Supported

Based on the results presented in Table 4, it can be stated that among gender roles, only the neutral gender role had a significant direct effect on the exogenous variable of marital conflicts, with a standardized beta coefficient of -0.229 and a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that the more prominent the neutral gender role, the fewer marital conflicts observed among individuals. The results also show that femininity and masculinity gender roles did not have significant direct effects on marital conflicts, with significance levels of 0.061 and 0.081, respectively.

According to the obtained results, the emotional needs variable did not have a significant direct effect on marital conflicts among individuals, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.069 and a significance level of 0.205, as the calculated significance level was above 0.05. Gender roles did not have a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the avoidance coping strategy, as the significance levels for the femininity gender role were 0.257, for the masculinity gender role 0.432, and for the neutral gender role 0.715, all of which were above the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the indirect effect of gender roles on marital conflicts through the mediation of the avoidance coping strategy is not supported. Additionally, gender roles did not have a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the overcompensation coping strategy, as the significance levels

for the neutral gender role were 0.101, for the femininity gender role 0.107, and for the masculinity gender role 0.058, all of which were above the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the indirect effect of gender roles on marital conflicts through the mediation of the overcompensation coping strategy is not supported. The exogenous variable of emotional needs had a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the avoidance coping strategy, with a standardized coefficient of 0.037 and a significance level of 0.015, significant at the 0.05 error level. As a result, it can be stated that as emotional needs increase, the avoidance coping strategy increases, which in turn leads to an increase in marital conflicts. The exogenous variable of emotional needs also had a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the overcompensation coping strategy, with a standardized coefficient of 0.030 and a significance level of 0.030, significant at the 0.05 error level. Therefore, it can be stated that as the emotional needs of couples increase, the overcompensation coping strategy increases, which in turn broadens marital conflicts.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Among the gender roles, only the neutral gender role had a direct and significant effect on marital conflicts. This

indicates that as the neutral gender role becomes more prominent, marital conflicts among individuals decrease. The results also show that the femininity and masculinity gender roles did not have a significant direct effect on marital conflicts. Adherence to gender stereotypes reduces role conflict (Zeraat Pisheh et al., 2020). Despite numerous criticisms, gender stereotypes may help reduce marital conflicts in some cases. This effect arises from the stabilization of specific gender and social roles and expectations within marital life. Gender stereotypes assign specific roles to men and women. For example, in many societies, men are expected to be the financial providers for the family, while women are expected to focus more on household tasks and child-rearing. This stabilization of roles can help reduce ambiguity and role conflict, thereby leading to fewer marital conflicts. Gender stereotypes create clear expectations for the behaviors and duties of each gender. These shared expectations can prevent misunderstandings and tensions arising from incorrect or differing expectations (Zeraat Pisheh et al., 2020). If a couple agrees that the man should make the primary financial decisions, there is less likelihood of conflict in this area. Following gender stereotypes often leads to conformity with cultural and social norms accepted by society and extended families. This conformity can help create social and familial support, thereby reducing external pressures on marital life. Commitment to traditional and stereotypical roles can reduce internal competition and conflicts within couples. When roles are clearly defined and accepted by both parties, conflicts arising from competition for dominance in tasks or roles decrease, and each gender naturally focuses on specific duties, thereby contributing to increased cooperation and harmony within the family. Accepting traditional and stereotypical roles increases feelings of satisfaction and self-worth. This satisfaction can help reduce conflicts, as each individual feels successful in fulfilling their duties, which in turn enhances marital satisfaction.

The study's results indicate that emotional needs did not have a direct and significant effect on marital conflicts among individuals. In other words, it cannot be confidently stated that emotional needs directly impact marital conflicts. According to the data and statistical analysis, it cannot be concluded that emotional needs significantly influence marital conflicts. This may be explained by the scattered nature of the data, which makes it difficult to observe a clear impact of emotional needs on marital conflicts. The wide variation in the experiences and living conditions of couples may reduce the correlation between these two variables.

Individual personality traits can also play a significant role in marital conflicts. For instance, individuals with more resilient personalities may better manage their emotional needs, leading to fewer conflicts. These variables can include communication styles, marital satisfaction, the level of social support, and cultural factors. The results highlight the complexity of the relationships between variables and the need for more comprehensive and detailed examination.

The results also showed that gender roles did not have a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the avoidance coping strategy, leading to the rejection of the indirect effect of gender roles on marital conflicts through avoidance coping strategy mediation. In other words, the avoidance coping style does not have the capacity to mediate the relationship between gender stereotypes and marital conflicts. Avoidance of or escape from confronting problems does not depend on individuals' views regarding their gender, and this behavior is likely to occur across all three gender stereotypes. The study's findings indicate that gender roles do not have a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the overcompensation coping strategy, leading to the rejection of the indirect effect of gender roles on marital conflicts through overcompensation coping strategy mediation. The seventh hypothesis is rejected. In other words, the overcompensation coping style does not play a mediating role in the relationship between gender stereotypes and marital conflicts. The likelihood of combating schemas is similar across all three gender stereotypes, and the use of this coping style does not depend on individuals' gender.

The study's results indicate that the exogenous variable of emotional needs had a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the avoidance coping strategy. As a result, it can be stated that as emotional needs increase, the use of avoidance coping strategies also increases, which in turn leads to an increase in marital conflicts. Some psychological theories, including the theory of emotional motivation, claim that human emotions influence their decisions and behaviors. According to this theory, humans seek to fulfill their emotional needs and tend to use strategies that reduce their emotional needs. Emotional needs include needs such as love, respect, validation, and a sense of self-worth. The avoidance coping style typically refers to the use of strategies where an individual avoids directly confronting problems and stressors and instead considers strategies such as denial or mediation. Emotional needs are crucial for maintaining and

strengthening interpersonal relationships. Couples may use avoidance coping strategies to meet their emotional needs in order to maintain their marital relationship. Emotional needs can influence couples' interactions. Couples may use strategies such as hatred or denial to meet their emotional needs, which may lead to marital conflicts.

Couples who have a high need for approval and attention from others may resort to avoidance strategies if these needs are not met. They may try to escape from addressing issues and problems in their relationship, which can lead to marital conflicts. If couples do not achieve their needs, they may feel lacking and frustrated. These feelings may lead them to use avoidance strategies, making them feel lonely and isolated. The use of avoidance strategies, such as avoiding discussions, increases marital conflicts. Individuals who have experienced many disappointments and conflicts in past relationships may be inclined to use avoidance strategies due to the fear of experiencing these disappointments again. They may avoid confronting marital issues to prevent further disappointments; therefore, an increase in emotional needs can lead to an increase in the use of avoidance strategies, ultimately resulting in increased marital conflicts.

The study's results showed that the exogenous variable of emotional needs had a significant indirect effect on marital conflicts through the mediation of the overcompensation coping strategy. As a result, it can be stated that as couples' emotional needs increase, the use of overcompensation coping strategies also increases, which in turn broadens marital conflicts. Couples with high emotional needs who, for reasons such as past experiences or repeated disappointments, interpret these needs negatively, may turn to overcompensation strategies. They may believe that to meet these needs, they need multiple marital interactions or relationships, which can lead to the expansion of marital conflicts. Overcompensation coping strategies typically involve inappropriate attempts to compensate for emotional needs through marital relationships and mutual interactions with the spouse, which may lead to broader marital conflicts. Couples with high emotional needs may struggle to manage their emotions effectively. Due to their inability to express and interpret their emotions, they may turn to overcompensation strategies, which can lead to an increase in marital conflicts.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

The study's population was limited to couples experiencing marital conflicts who sought counseling services in Tehran, so caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other groups. The use of self-report questionnaires to collect information from the sample was accompanied by the possibility of response bias. The inability to control for the gender variable was a limitation of this study. Future research should be conducted in other cities with different cultures and compare the results with the present study. In addition to questionnaires, interviews should be used to collect information from the sample. To better understand marital conflicts, it is necessary to study other variables (basic needs, marital procrastination, resilience). Based on the study's results, it is recommended that psychiatrists, family counselors, and couples therapists use personality tests to identify the root causes of marital conflicts. Family counselors are advised to utilize schema therapy to reduce marital conflicts. It is recommended that family authorities use appropriate education to help families select the correct coping styles and thus reduce existing problems. Family authorities are also advised to conduct pre-marriage education classes to prevent marital conflicts. The study's results should be communicated to couples so that they can recognize their schemas and seek treatment, thereby preventing conflicts and achieving a loving and intimate life.

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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 equally contributed in this article.

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