Development of a Structural Model of Emotional Divorce Based on the Dark Triad Personality Traits and Conflict Resolution Styles with the Mediation of Marital Conflicts

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

Objective: This study aims to model the structural equations of emotional divorce based on dark personality traits and conflict resolution styles with the mediation of marital conflicts.

Methods and Materials: The research method was descriptive-correlational based on structural equations. The statistical population included all married women aged 25-50 years at Islamic Azad University (Yadegar-e-Imam, Abolfatoh Razi (Mothers), and Tehran North campuses) in the first half of 2021, selected online due to the COVID-19 pandemic using convenience sampling. The research instruments included the Emotional Divorce Questionnaire (Gottman, 1994), the Dark Triad Personality Questionnaire (Johnson & Webster, 2010), Rahim's Conflict Resolution Styles (Rahim, 1983), and the Marital Conflict Questionnaire (Sanaei, 1996). Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software.

Findings: The results of structural equation modeling indicated that the proposed model fits the empirical data (RMSEA = 0.063). There was a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and emotional divorce ($\beta = 0.173$), and between constructive style ($\beta = -0.556$) and non-constructive style ($\beta = 0.26$) with marital conflicts. The indirect path coefficient of narcissistic traits (P = 0.007), constructive (P = 0.011) and non-constructive conflict resolution styles (P = 0.005) with the dependent variable emotional divorce through the mediating variable of marital conflicts was significant. However, the mediating role of marital conflicts in the relationship between antisocial traits (P = 0.798) and Machiavellianism (P = 0.877) with emotional divorce was not confirmed.

Conclusion: Dark personality traits and constructive conflict resolution styles can indirectly affect emotional divorce by influencing marital conflicts, in addition to their direct effect.

Keywords: Emotional Divorce, Dark Personality Traits, Conflict Resolution Styles, Marital Conflicts

1. Introduction

Divorce is one of the most significant factors disrupting life (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). Divorce and separation leave numerous negative impacts both psychologically and physically on couples (Kanter et al., 2019). Sometimes couples continue their lives completely separate from each other without any feelings or emotions towards each other (Atan & Buluş, 2019). Due to the cultural structure of society, the emphasis of Islam on the repugnance of divorce, and the consequences of divorce, especially with children involved, such couples do not opt for separation and live in a cold, psychologically and even physically draining life for many years, which is termed emotional divorce (Akbari et al., 2020).

Emotional divorce is a condition where the family structure appears to be intact, but it is hollow from within. This phenomenon has hidden and subtle angles that require extensive and precise studies to be understood (Rezvani & Saemi, 2019). Although social and cultural factors play a significant role in marital life, studies show that personality traits play a key role in marital stability (He et al., 2018). Recently, psychological research has focused on the dark personality construct (Kaiser et al., 2015). The term Dark Triad, or Dark Triangle, was first introduced in 2002 by two researchers named Paulhus and Williams, encompassing narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy as dark personality traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). These traits are defined as the tendency to deceitful behaviors (Machiavellianism), a sense of entitlement (narcissism), and impulsivity (psychopathy) (Womick et al., 2019). All three traits are based on emotional coldness (Pan et al., 2018).

Machiavellianism as a personality trait is characterized by distrust, ambition, duplicity, and lying (Basharpoor et al., 2021). Machiavellians are pessimistic and often pursue their needs by exploiting others, without regard to ethics (Fox & Rooney, 2015). Antisocial personality (psychopathy) centers on cruelty and a lack of emotion or remorse and is characterized by hostile interpersonal styles (contempt, revenge, and reciprocal arrogance) (Smoker & March). Narcissism involves a long-term pattern of abnormal behaviors accompanied by exaggerated feelings of self-importance, excessive need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others (George & Short, 2018).

Theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that personality traits are associated with a set of unethical behaviors that can affect the constructive relationships of couples. Yu, Di, Jiang-Meng & Yu-Chen (2020) showed that

Machiavellianism and psychopathy rated by partners significantly impact marital instability by affecting marital quality (Yu et al., 2020). Carton & Egan (2017) found that low compatibility and strong psychopathy are the strongest predictors and often have a predictable relationship with psychological, physical, and sexual abuse (Carton & Egan, 2017). A study by Inancsi, Lang & Bereczkei (2016) showed that Machiavellianism has a negative correlation with warmth, intimacy, compatibility, and loyalty in romantic relationships (Ináncsi et al., 2016). Lavner, Lamkin, Miller, Campbell & Carney (2016) demonstrated that narcissism decreases marital satisfaction (Lavner et al., 2016). Horan, Guian & Bengehart (2015) showed that dark personality traits are associated with contempt, criticism, and lack of cooperation in couples (Horan et al., 2015). Basharpour, Faryor & Abadi (2020) found that dark personality traits have a significant positive effect on emotional divorce (Basharpoor et al., 2021). Rashidi, Monirpour & Dokanaei (2020) found that differentiation, personality structure, and attachment styles are significantly related to emotional divorce (Rashidi et al., 2022).

Another important factor contributing to emotional divorce is marital conflict (Bravo & White Lumpkin, 2010). Marital conflicts are one of the common issues couples face today (Cheng, 2010; Nikoogoftar, 2021). The concept of emotional divorce is linked to marital dissatisfaction or conflicts (Mousavi & Rahiminezhad, 2015; Navabinejad et al., 2024). Marital conflicts often occur when couples' interactions are inappropriate (Yang et al., 2016). Research indicates that marital conflicts and all its dimensions have a high positive and significant correlation with emotional divorce (Afkhami-Poostchi & Mirdoraghi, 2023; Carton & Egan, 2017; Nikoogoftar, 2021).

When conflict is used constructively, it can be a valuable factor for deeper understanding and productive mutual relationships. Therefore, the healthiness of a relationship is not so much dependent on the amount of conflict but on how conflicts are managed and resolved (Karaırmak & Duran, 2008). Conflict resolution skills are a key indicator of successful romantic relationships, and individuals with strong conflict resolution skills tend to have longer relationships (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2013). Studies (Cheng, 2010; Dildar et al., 2013; Muraru & Turliuc, 2012; Weiss, 2014) emphasize the influential role of conflict resolution training in improving mutual relationships between husband and wife, advocating that training in necessary skills for marital conflict resolution is beneficial for improving mutual relationships.

All spouses may use these styles sometimes, but if one becomes a regular method for reacting to differences, it reduces the likelihood of constructive conflict resolution and damages the marital relationship, leaving detrimental effects on physical and emotional life (Sadati et al., 2021; Somohano, 2013). Unresolved issues and conflicts often lead to negative confrontation. Undoubtedly, conflict is a barrier to the continuation of the relationship (Henning, 2003; Karimi et al., 2015).

Although conflict is generally seen negatively, it can positively contribute to the quality of relationships and personal growth if managed and resolved correctly (Bolton, 2002). The ability to manage and resolve conflicts constructively can strengthen the relationship and help couples establish an intimate and close relationship (Somohano, 2013). Therefore, couples with high conflict resolution skills experience less relationship coldness and emotional divorce.

Overall, conflict is divided into constructive and non-constructive types. Constructive conflict focuses on compromise and suitable, positive solutions, while non-constructive conflict relies on threats and authoritarian, inappropriate solutions (Rahim & Magner, 1995). Conflict resolution styles are behaviors exhibited when facing a conflict situation to overcome it. These styles include avoidance, integration, compromise, dominance, and obliging. The avoidance style is associated with isolation, delegating responsibility to others, blaming others, and withdrawing oneself. The integration style emphasizes reducing differences and focusing on similarities to meet others' expectations and issues. The compromise style balances attention to one's own and others' expectations and needs, referring to the distribution of concessions between parties. For instance, Hosseini Nasab's research shows that the collaborative and compromising conflict resolution styles have a positive and significant relationship with marital compatibility (Babapour, 2007; Dibaji et al., 2009; Dildar et al., 2013; Henning, 2003).

The dominance style is characterized by a threatening orientation. The obliging style emphasizes the exchange of information and the examination of differences to reach a mutually acceptable solution, associated with problem-solving and leading to creative solutions (Sorenson, 1999). Dibaji Foroushani, Emami Pour & Mahmoudi (2009) show that adults with more constructive conflict resolution strategies have more durable marital satisfaction (Dibaji et al., 2009).

From the review of conflict resolution behaviors, consistent findings suggest that when one or both spouses exhibit unregulated or hostile conflict styles, marital satisfaction and quality are seriously threatened. However, an unanswered question in previous research is which combination of conflict resolution styles leads to positive outcomes and which to negative ones. It is noteworthy that most studies on marital conflict resolution styles consider the couple as the unit of analysis. However, Busby & Holman (2009) point out that conflict behavior and resolution patterns can also be studied at the individual level. They believe that although individuals may show different responses in various conflict situations, each person has a predominant style of confronting conflict that is observable and can be studied (Busby & Holman, 2009). Thus, conflict resolution strategies can be an intriguing variable related to emotional divorce.

Considering the role of personality traits in marital stability on one hand, and the role of conflict resolution styles on the other, as well as the theoretical role marital conflicts can play in the relationship between these variables, and given the research gap in modeling the relationship of these variables with emotional divorce, the present study aims to investigate whether the structural model of emotional divorce based on the Dark Triad personality traits and conflict resolution styles with the mediation of marital conflicts has a good fit.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This research is a fundamental study in terms of purpose and a descriptive-correlational study in terms of method, conducted within the framework of structural equations. Additionally, this research is quantitative in nature and cross-sectional in terms of execution time. The statistical population consisted of married female students aged 25-50 years, studying at Islamic Azad University of Tehran province with an associate degree or higher in 2021. According to Stevens' (2012) rule and structural equation researchers suggesting selecting at least 15-20 cases per measured variable, and considering that the proposed model includes 12 measured variables, a sample size of 250 was determined considering some dropout in questionnaires.

The sampling method was convenience sampling. After expressing willingness to participate, 463 questionnaires were collected online. Among these, questionnaires scoring at least 8 on the Emotional Divorce Questionnaire were

included in the study. After excluding some incomplete questionnaires, 239 questionnaires were finally analyzed. The inclusion criteria were: 1) being a married female student at Tehran Azad Universities, 2) residing in Tehran, 3) aged 25-50 years, 4) scoring above 8 on Gottman's Emotional Divorce Questionnaire. The exclusion criterion was incomplete questionnaires.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the inability to access samples in person, the questionnaires were designed online. The questionnaire link was posted in the student channels of Yadegar-e-Imam, Abolfatoh, and Tehran North campuses, requesting eligible married women aged 25-50 to complete them. The questionnaires were anonymous, and participants were assured that their information would remain confidential.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Borderline Personality Disorder

Gottman's Emotional Divorce Scale (1994) is a 24-item scale where participants respond with yes or no options. The items mainly assess feelings about the marital relationship and intimacy with the spouse. Zero points are assigned to "no" responses and one point to "yes" responses, with higher scores indicating greater emotional divorce in the marital relationship. The cut-off score is 8, above which individuals are at risk of emotional divorce and professional help is recommended. The original scale's reliability was reported above 0.70. In Iran, Samari & Nokhahi (2018) reported an overall reliability of 0.94 using Cronbach's alpha. Khosravi, Moradi, Ahmadian & Yousefi (2019) calculated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 for the scale's reliability. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.80 (Khosravi et al., 2019; Narimani et al., 2021).

2.2.2. Dark Triad Personality

The Dark Triad Personality Questionnaire, created by Johnson & Webster (2010), is a short 12-item scale measuring dark personality traits. It includes three subscales: narcissism (4 items), Machiavellianism (4 items), and antisocial traits (4 items), measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Item 7 is reverse scored. The sum of each subscale's scores indicates the individual's score for that personality trait. Johnson & Webster tested the psychometric properties, including differential, concurrent, construct, and test-retest validity in four studies, reporting Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.72

to 0.77 for Machiavellianism, 0.66 to 0.69 for antisocial traits, and 0.78 to 0.85 for narcissism. Ghamarani, Samadi, Taqinejad & Shamsi (2015) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.92, 0.40, 0.68, and 0.81 for Machiavellianism, antisocial traits, narcissism, and total score, respectively. Test-retest reliability for the total score and subscales ranged from 0.76 to 0.87. Basharpour & Fahimi (2015) confirmed face and construct validity, reporting overall reliability and dark traits (narcissistic, antisocial, Machiavellian) with test-retest coefficients of 0.89, 0.87, 0.76, and 0.86, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients from 0.87 to 0.91. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.78 (Basharpoor et al., 2021; Ghomrani et al., 2015; Jonason & Webster, 2010).

2.2.3. Conflict Resolution

Rahim's Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire (1983) measures five conflict resolution styles: integrating (7 items), dominating (6 items), obliging (5 items), compromising (6 items), and avoiding (4 items), scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Rahim (1983) reported satisfactory reliability using test-retest and internal consistency methods for the subscales. Rahim & Magner (1994) confirmed the internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.72 to 0.77. In a 1995 study on 1474 participants, Rahim & Magner confirmed the factorial structure of the conflict resolution styles model, showing the tool's good convergent and divergent validity with Cronbach's alpha from 0.76 to 0.85. Henning (2003) validated the Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CRQ), confirming its criterion validity using concurrent validity with the ROCI-II, and internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for ROCI-II. In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the integrating style was 0.76, dominating style 0.70, obliging style 0.71, avoiding style 0.50, and compromising style 0.53 (Henning, 2003).

2.2.4. Marital Conflict

The Marital Conflict Questionnaire, developed by Sanaei in 1996 based on clinical experiences, includes 42 items assessing seven dimensions of marital conflict: decreased cooperation, decreased sexual relationship, increased emotional reactions, increased child support seeking, increased individual relationship with relatives, decreased family relationship with spouse's relatives and friends, and financial separation. The maximum score is 270 and the minimum is 54, with higher scores indicating more conflict. Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale from never to

always. Torabi & Sanaei (1996) assessed reliability and validity, finding significant differences between adjusted and maladjusted groups, indicating the tool's ability to differentiate conflicting couples. In a re-norming study by Bashkar (2003), Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was 0.95, with subscale alphas of 0.90, 0.82, 0.95, 0.90, 0.95, 0.85, and 0.92 for decreased cooperation, decreased sexual relationship, increased emotional reactions, child support seeking, relationship with own family, decreased relationship with spouse's family, and financial separation, respectively. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.89 (Afkhami-Poostchi & Mirdoraghi, 2023).

2.3. Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including central tendency, dispersion, skewness and kurtosis indices, and structural equation modeling using SPSS26 and AMOS24 software were employed. To evaluate the fit of the collected data with the proposed model, the following indices were used: Chi-square ($x2$), Chi-square/df ratio ($x2$/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The significance level was set at 0.05.

3. Findings and Results

The final sample size was 239 after excluding invalid cases. Since the data were collected online, missing data accounted for less than 0.5% of the total data. The average age of participants was 36.39 years with a standard deviation of 10.22, ranging from 25 to 50 years.

Table 1 shows descriptive indices of the main research variables and their Pearson correlation coefficients:

Table 1

Descriptive Indices and Correlation Matrix of Main Research Variables (N = 239)

Variables	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Dark Traits	27.306	6.688	1				
(2) Constructive Style	47.13	6.14	-0.081	1			
(3) Non-Constructive Style	50.40	5.82	0.034	0.204**	1		
(4) Marital Conflicts	88.94	20.29	0.269**	0.468**	0.113	1	
(5) Emotional Divorce	12.703	4.875	0.216**	-0.401**	0.141*	0.607**	1

Note. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.

Table 1 indicates that the mean total score of emotional divorce is 12.70 with a standard deviation of 4.87. The mean scores for constructive and non-constructive conflict resolution styles are 47.13 and 50.40, respectively. The mean total score for dark personality traits is 27.30 with a standard deviation of 6.68. The mean score for marital conflicts is 88.94, with a standard deviation of 20.29. The correlation coefficients show significant relationships between all independent variables (dark personality traits, constructive, and non-constructive conflict resolution styles) and the mediating variable (marital conflicts) with the dependent variable emotional divorce at 0.01 and 0.05 significance levels. Constructive conflict resolution style has a significant negative relationship with emotional divorce, while non-constructive styles, dark personality traits, and marital conflicts have significant positive relationships with emotional divorce.

The skewness and kurtosis indices fall within the range of -2 to +2, indicating normal distribution. The multivariate normality was confirmed using the Mahalanobis distance, with minimum and maximum values ranging from 0.85 to 17.48, below the critical value of 18.47 for four predictor variables, confirming multivariate normality. The variance inflation factor and tolerance values indicated no multicollinearity issues.

After confirming the assumptions, the main research question—whether the structural model of emotional divorce based on dark personality traits and conflict resolution styles with the mediation of marital conflicts fits well—was addressed using structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation. The fit indices of the model are presented in Table 2:

Table 2

Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	χ²	df	χ²/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	IFI	CFI
Initial Model	135.48	88	1.54	0.048	0.937	0.902	0.964	0.963
Acceptable Values	close to 0	-	< 3	< 0.08	> 0.90	> 0.80	> 0.90	> 0.90

The model fit indices indicate that all indices are within acceptable ranges (χ²/df = 1.54, RMSEA = 0.048, GFI = 0.937, AGFI = 0.902, IFI = 0.964, CFI = 0.963), confirming the main research question that the structural model of emotional divorce based on dark personality traits and conflict resolution styles with the mediation of marital conflicts fits well. The standardized direct path coefficients and their significance are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Standardized Coefficients and Their Significance

From	To	β	CR	sig	Result
Machiavellian	Marital Conflicts	0.013	0.190	0.849	Rejected
Antisocial	Marital Conflicts	-0.021	-0.333	0.739	Rejected
Narcissistic	Marital Conflicts	0.333	4.796	0.001	Accepted
Constructive	Marital Conflicts	-0.556	-7.195	0.001	Accepted
Non-constructive	Marital Conflicts	0.26	4.153	0.001	Accepted
Marital Conflicts	Emotional Divorce	0.782	6.582	0.001	Accepted
Machiavellian	Emotional Divorce	0.173	2.696	0.007	Accepted
Antisocial	Emotional Divorce	0.014	0.237	0.813	Rejected
Narcissistic	Emotional Divorce	-0.053	-0.8	0.424	Rejected
Constructive	Emotional Divorce	-0.088	-1.195	0.232	Rejected
Non-constructive	Emotional Divorce	0.07	1.154	0.248	Rejected

According to Table 3, there is a significant negative relationship between constructive conflict resolution style (β = -0.556) and a significant positive relationship between non-constructive conflict resolution style (β = 0.26) and marital conflicts. A significant positive relationship is observed between Machiavellianism and emotional divorce (β = 0.173). Finally, there is a significant positive relationship between marital conflicts (β = 0.782) and emotional divorce.

To examine the mediating role of marital conflicts in the relationship between dark personality traits and constructive and non-constructive conflict resolution styles with emotional divorce, indirect coefficients were calculated using the bootstrap method and their significance was evaluated. Table 4 the standardized indirect coefficients, and upper and lower limits at a 95% confidence level.

Table 4

Indirect Coefficients and Confidence Limits

Independent Variable	Mediator	Dependent Variable	Indirect Effect	Sig	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Narcissistic	Marital Conflicts	Emotional Divorce	0.260	0.007	0.154	0.401
Antisocial			-0.016	0.798	-0.096	0.069
Machiavellian			0.010	0.877	-0.082	0.088
Constructive			-0.435	0.011	-0.579	-0.329
Non-constructive			0.204	0.005	0.134	0.303

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Sadegh Khani et al.
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Figure 1
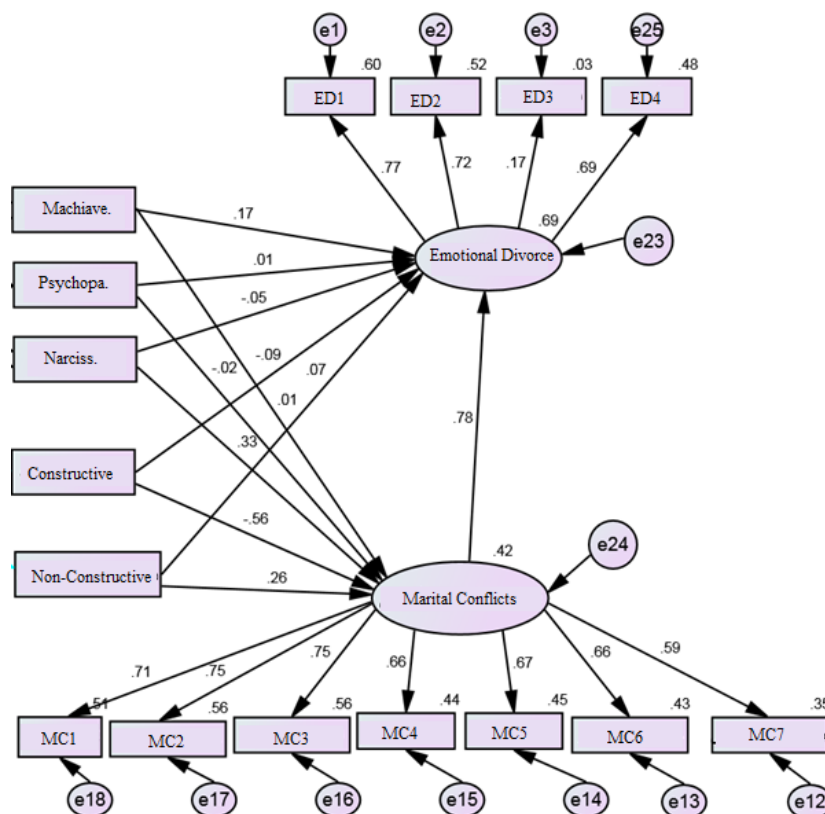
Model with Beta Values

Table 4 shows that the indirect coefficient between narcissistic traits, constructive and non-constructive conflict resolution styles, and the dependent variable (emotional divorce) through the mediating variable (marital conflicts) is significant. Therefore, marital conflicts mediate the relationship between narcissistic personality traits and constructive and non-constructive conflict resolution styles with emotional divorce. However, the mediating role of marital conflicts in the relationship between antisocial and Machiavellian traits with emotional divorce was not confirmed. Figure 1 illustrates the structural model of the relationship between dark personality traits, constructive and non-constructive conflict resolution styles, and emotional divorce through the mediating variable marital conflicts.

As seen in Figure 1, the total squared multiple correlation of the dependent variable emotional divorce is 0.69, indicating that approximately 69% of the variance of this variable is explained by the predictor and mediating variables defined in the model.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the structural model of emotional divorce based on the Dark Triad personality traits and conflict resolution styles with the mediation of marital conflicts was developed in a sample of married women in Tehran. The results showed that Machiavellian traits are related to emotional divorce and that the indirect coefficient between narcissistic traits and the dependent variable (emotional divorce) through the mediating variable (marital conflicts) is significant. This finding is consistent with much previous research (Basharpoor et al., 2021; He et al., 2018; Horan et al., 2015; Lavner et al., 2016; Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020; Yu et al., 2020).

According to Yu et al. (2020), dark traits have the greatest impact on marital instability (Yu et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results of He et al. (2018) showed that personality traits play a key role in marital stability (He et al., 2018). Basharpour et al. (2021) also indicated that dark personality traits have a significant positive effect on emotional divorce (Basharpoor et al., 2021).

Individuals with underdeveloped personalities or personality disorders face significant interpersonal issues, leading to emotional divorce (Basharpoor et al., 2021). In summary, dark personality traits and the associated problems can cause marital conflicts, increasing emotional divorce among couples. The current study confirmed the relationship between dark personality traits, marital conflicts, and emotional divorce. Women with higher narcissism, a component of dark traits, experienced more marital conflicts, leading to increased emotional divorce.

In explaining the hypothesis of the mediating role of marital conflicts between emotional divorce and dark personality traits, it can be said that dark traits have negative and unhealthy characteristics, reducing psychological resilience and the ability to cope with life problems. Over time, this leads to dissatisfaction and increased marital conflicts (Basharpoor et al., 2021).

The data showed that the indirect coefficient between constructive and non-constructive conflict resolution styles and emotional divorce through marital conflicts is significant. This finding aligns with prior research (Afkhami-Poostchi & Mirdoraghi, 2023; Nikoogoftar, 2021; Sadati et al., 2021; Somohano, 2013; Vincent et al., 1975), who examined marital conflicts in couples experiencing conflict and women experiencing emotional separation. These studies showed significant differences in problem-solving styles between the groups.

Many studies indicate that high marital conflict challenges life stability and quality, leading to psychological, physical, economic, and social consequences. Sadati et al. (2021) found that marital conflicts transform couples' communication into a non-constructive model (Sadati et al., 2021). Karimi et al. (2014) also found a relationship between conflict resolution styles and marital burnout (Karimi et al., 2015). Beirami et al. (2012) found a direct correlation between marital satisfaction and integrative and compromising conflict resolution styles, and an inverse correlation with avoidant conflict resolution style (Beirami, 2012).

Etemadi et al. (2014) showed a significant correlation between conflict resolution styles and marital intimacy (Etemadi et al., 2014). Hosseini Nasab et al. (2009) found a significant relationship between conflict resolution styles and marital compatibility (Hossaini Nasab et al., 2009). Consistent with previous research, this study showed a negative relationship between constructive conflict resolution styles and emotional divorce, indicating that higher use of constructive styles reduces emotional divorce.

Using constructive conflict styles helps find new solutions to conflicts, reducing emotional divorce. However, chronic fatigue and emotional exhaustion from marital conflicts can decrease the use of constructive styles, increasing emotional divorce (Afkhami-Poostchi & Mirdoraghi, 2023). Thus, constructive conflict resolution styles can reduce marital conflicts and emotional divorce, confirmed by this study. Women using constructive styles reported fewer conflicts and lower emotional divorce scores.

The relationship between emotional divorce and conflict resolution styles is not linear; other moderating variables, such as marital conflicts, play a significant role. Marital conflicts cause emotions like despair, resentment, and disgust, reducing constructive conflict resolution and increasing non-constructive styles, thus increasing emotional divorce. Marital conflicts disrupt family power structures and intimate communications, increasing emotional divorce (Nikoogoftar, 2021). Life changes and marital conflicts destabilize the marital system, making couples feel hopeless and unable to forgive, leading to emotional divorce (Overall & McNulty, 2017). This study confirmed that women using more adaptive conflict resolution styles reported lower emotional divorce scores.

5. Limitations and Suggestions

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, making in-person questionnaire completion impossible, so online questionnaires were used. This could introduce self-reporting biases. Moreover, the study was conducted on married women in Tehran, so generalizing to other cities or married men requires caution, as different results may occur. The concurrent administration of questionnaires with many items could cause respondent fatigue, affecting responses.

Future research should control individual differences, particularly socioeconomic and environmental factors, influencing emotional divorce. Given the significant relationship between emotional divorce and dark traits, especially narcissism, with marital conflicts, training to control these negative traits is recommended to improve marital relationships and reduce emotional divorce. Training couples in positive conflict resolution styles can reduce marital conflicts and emotional divorce. Counselors should provide strategies to reduce negative traits in couples to help control these traits, reducing marital conflicts and emotional divorce.

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Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. To adhere to ethical principles, participants were informed about the research objectives, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and confidentiality. This study received ethical approval (IR.IAU.CTB.REC.1400.056) from the Central Tehran Branch and is based on the first author's doctoral dissertation at Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, in general psychology.

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 contributed equally.

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