

# Modeling the Relationship Between Psychological Capital and Alexithymia with Emotional Divorce Through the Mediation of Spiritual Intelligence in Couples Seeking Divorce

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to determine the fit of the model examining the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence in couples seeking divorce. This research employed a descriptive-correlational design. The statistical population included all couples seeking divorce who referred to counseling centers in Babol in 2023 (N = 780). Using a simple random sampling method, 271 women were selected (n = 271) and responded to the following instruments: the Psychological Capital Questionnaire by Luthans et al. (2007), the Toronto Alexithymia Scale by Bagby et al. (1994), the Emotional Divorce Scale by Gottman et al. (1995), and the Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire by Abdollahzadeh et al. (2008). Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling and path analysis. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between psychological capital and emotional divorce ( $r = -0.476$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and a significant positive correlation between alexithymia and emotional divorce ( $r = 0.380$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Psychological capital had an indirect and negative effect on emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence ( $\beta = -0.460$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and alexithymia had an indirect and negative effect on emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence ( $\beta = -0.461$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The model of the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce mediated by spiritual intelligence demonstrated an adequate fit. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the enrichment of psychological concepts and marital relationships. From a practical standpoint, it may serve as an effective tool for family counselors, couple therapists, and social policymakers to reduce emotional divorce and enhance the quality of family life.

**Keywords:** *psychological capital, alexithymia, emotional divorce, spiritual intelligence.*

## 1. Introduction

The family, as a natural and social institution, is regarded as one of the fundamental pillars of the social structure in human societies. This institution, with its specific characteristics, establishes a set of rules and principles for its members and defines a variety of roles (Kahraman & Özbay, 2025). The family is not only the setting in which material and psychological needs are met but also a relational environment where marital dynamics significantly impact individuals' social and mental health (Kahraman & Özbay, 2025; Purnomo & Suprihandari, 2025). Healthy and balanced family relationships, particularly marital ones, form the foundation for societal stability and cohesion. The better the internal family dynamics, the more stable the society to which these families belong becomes (Sabaqi et al., 2017).

One of the principal functions of the family in many societies is the regulation of marital relationships, which must be founded on equilibrium and appropriateness (Greenwood et al., 2016). Despite the fact that family and marital relationships fulfill numerous human needs, in some cases, serious dysfunctions occur, which can deeply and negatively influence individual and societal life. Divorce, as one such dysfunction, represents a major threat not only to families but also to the broader community. It is a leading cause of family breakdown, disrupting interpersonal relationships and causing far-reaching social consequences, especially for children (Masruroh et al., 2024; Mohamadjani & Fazeli, 2024; Naeij Bandpey & Dalir, 2024).

Beyond legal divorce, there is a phenomenon known as emotional divorce, which is often the first step in the process of formal divorce and is unfortunately frequently overlooked. Emotional divorce refers to a relational state in which spouses are still officially recognized as married but are devoid of emotional and psychological connection. When prolonged, this condition can lead to more severe relational issues and ultimately formal divorce (Khatami et al., 2019). According to studies conducted by the Family Sociology Group at the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, between 60% to 70% of families experience emotional divorce, posing a significant threat to familial and societal well-being (Zahedi, 2021). Identifying the factors contributing to emotional divorce and strategies for addressing it can play a key role in reducing both emotional and legal divorce rates. Among the most critical contributing factors are individual and psychological characteristics, including psychological capital, alexithymia,

and spiritual intelligence. These factors may directly or indirectly affect the quality of marital relationships and the likelihood of emotional divorce.

Psychological capital, a concept derived from the school of positive psychology, comprises four components: hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. It is believed to function as a protective factor, enabling couples to show greater resilience against marital challenges and maintain their relationships (Kim et al., 2019; Santisi et al., 2020). According to Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017), psychological capital, through its components, is defined by traits such as individuals' belief in their capabilities to achieve success, persistence in pursuing goals, creating positive self-attributions, and tolerating difficulties. Studies (Anhange et al., 2017; Rock et al., 2014; Sepahrian Azar et al., 2016) indicate that increased hope reduces emotional divorce. Research (Danesh et al., 2017; Fitzpatrick & Vacha-Haase, 2010) found a correlation between resilience and emotional divorce. Optimism plays a decisive role in psychological well-being and, by extension, enhances couple relationships (Vulpe & Dafinoiu, 2012), thereby reducing emotional divorce (Sheikh Zeyn al-Din et al., 2018). Decker's (2018) study revealed that individuals with high self-efficacy are more motivated and ultimately experience more harmonious marital relationships (Deckers, 2018).

On the other hand, alexithymia is characterized by difficulty in identifying and describing emotions in a concrete, reality-based manner, accompanied by low emotional arousal and limited imaginative capacity (Bagby et al., 1994; Bagby & Taylor, 1997). Some studies have linked alexithymia to difficulties in forming and maintaining intimate relationships and interpersonal problems (Baysan-Arslan et al., 2016). Yelsma and Marrow (2003) investigated the relationship between alexithymia and marital satisfaction, finding that low emotional expressiveness in either spouse negatively impacted the other's marital satisfaction (Yelsma & Marrow, 2003). Lee (2011) found that alexithymia is inversely related to life satisfaction across different cultures (Lee, 2010). Guvensel et al. (2018) also showed a positive and significant relationship between alexithymia and marital conflict (Guvensel et al., 2018). According to Wells et al. (2016), difficulties in processing emotional facial expressions such as anger, fear, and sadness, along with a slower response to negative emotions in others, are key contributors to marital dissatisfaction among individuals with alexithymia (Wells et al., 2016). Studies have also shown that alexithymia is a predictor and

accelerator of emotional divorce (Nosrat Talab Haghi & Bakhshipur, 2022).

Another factor that may influence emotional divorce is spiritual intelligence (Semalpour Babaahmadi et al., 2021; Sheikh Zeyn al-Din et al., 2018). Theoretically, individuals with high spiritual intelligence view life as meaningful and purposeful. Because they interpret events through the broader meaning of life, they are less prone to despair when encountering life's challenges and are more capable of coping with them (Marashi et al., 2016). Spiritual intelligence enables individuals to reframe and reinterpret their experiences, granting deeper personal meaning to events from a phenomenological standpoint (Mahasneh et al., 2015). Research (Kaur & Singh, 2013; Malmir et al., 2016) confirmed the relationship between spiritual intelligence and life satisfaction, indicating that spiritual intelligence can enhance individuals' life satisfaction. Other studies have shown that individuals with high levels of spiritual well-being report greater marital satisfaction (Mohammadi et al., 2014; Mousavi Moghadam et al., 2015; Narimani et al., 2015; Sadeghi et al., 2014).

It is evident that the primary drivers of family direction and functioning are the spouses. In contemporary times, Iranian marital relationships are undergoing structural changes, with widespread shifts and fragmentation becoming evident. This evolution can disrupt the family system and potentially lead to its breakdown. Divorce statistics in both Iran and globally demonstrate that marital satisfaction and harmony are not easily attained, and divorce petitions are increasingly common. This situation highlights the growing need to examine the relational dynamics of Iranian couples.

Moreover, reviews of the causes of familial issues and dysfunctional marital relationships indicate that rising psychological and behavioral problems in society are among the most significant factors (Bakhshizadeh et al., 2019). Despite existing scientific evidence regarding the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce, significant gaps remain in clearly explaining these connections. Spiritual intelligence, as a potentially influential and cultivable factor, is hypothesized to be associated with emotional divorce and is examined here as a mediating variable. Furthermore, theoretical and empirical evidence suggests a direct relationship between alexithymia and spiritual intelligence.

Although prior research has explored various aspects of this issue, no study has specifically addressed this topic in its entirety. Based on previous studies, and considering that

each component—psychological capital, alexithymia, and spiritual intelligence—is individually related to emotional divorce, and because no research was found that simultaneously examined the interrelation of these variables, this study is distinct in terms of context, time, and subject matter. Accordingly, the research seeks to answer the following question: Does the model of the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce, mediated by spiritual intelligence, demonstrate sufficient fit among couples seeking divorce?

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which examines the relationships among variables within a causal model. The statistical population consisted of all couples seeking divorce who referred to counseling centers in the city of Babol in 2023. Based on available statistics, the number of couples filing for divorce through the judiciary was estimated at approximately 780 couples ( $N = 780$ ).

Inclusion criteria for the study were: a minimum marriage duration of 5 years, female gender, age between 35 and 55 years, at least one child, and at least a high school diploma. Exclusion criteria included suffering from chronic physical illnesses, presence of psychological disorders (as self-reported), substance abuse, and use of counseling or psychological services within the past three months. In accordance with Klein's (2016) recommendation, the sample size was determined to be 271 participants ( $n = 271$ ).

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Spiritual Intelligence

The Spiritual Intelligence Scale was developed by Abdollahzadeh et al. (2008) based on the cultural characteristics of Iranian society. It consists of 29 items across two subscales: understanding and connection with the existential source, and spiritual life. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Abdollahzadeh et al. (2008) administered the scale to a sample of 280 individuals, and the reliability was reported as 0.89. Using varimax rotation, two main factors were extracted: "understanding and connection with the existential source" (12 items) and "spiritual life or reliance on the inner core" (17 items). The correlation coefficients between these subscales and the 83-item

Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale by Amram and Dryer (2008) were 0.76 and 0.71, respectively (Amram, 2022). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire was 0.898, indicating high internal consistency.

#### 2.2.2. Emotional Divorce

The Emotional Divorce Questionnaire developed by Gottman et al. (1995) includes 24 yes/no questions that assess emotional divorce and emotional loneliness. Face validity was confirmed by four subject-matter experts following back-translation. Cronbach's alpha reliability was reported as 0.91 for both men and women (Hashemi & Asghari Ebrahimi Abad, 2016). In a study by Mousavi and Rahiminejad (2015), reliability was reported at 0.93, and face validity was confirmed by experts (Mousavi & Rahiminejad, 2015). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was calculated at 0.891, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

#### 2.2.3. Psychological Capital

Developed by Luthans et al. (2007), this 24-item scale is widely used to assess four constructs: self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and optimism, with each subscale comprising six items. Participants respond using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the intended factor structure. The six-factor model demonstrated better fit and alignment with the theoretical model. The chi-square value for the scale was 24.6, with a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.97 and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.08. The reliability of the instrument, based on Cronbach's alpha, was 0.85 (Luthans et al., 2007). In a study by Dianat-Nasab et al. (2014), Cronbach's alpha was reported at 0.71 and construct validity at 0.66 (Dianat Nasab et al., 2014). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.881, indicating high internal consistency.

#### 2.2.4. Alexithymia

The Toronto Alexithymia Scale developed by Bagby et al. (1994) consists of 20 items and assesses three subscales:

difficulty identifying feelings, difficulty describing feelings, and externally oriented thinking. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A total score is calculated from the sum of the three subscale scores to indicate overall alexithymia. The TAS-20 is suitable for use in both general and clinical populations and can be administered individually or in groups. In Bagby et al.'s (1994) study, the scale demonstrated good internal consistency and test-retest reliability, and it confirmed the three-factor structure consistent with the theoretical framework. Reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.81 for the total scale, 0.78 for difficulty identifying feelings, 0.75 for difficulty describing feelings, and 0.66 for externally oriented thinking (Bagby et al., 1994). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the full scale was calculated at 0.901, indicating strong internal consistency.

#### 2.3. Data Analysis

In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) and path analysis were employed using SPSS and LISREL software.

### 3. Findings and Results

Descriptive findings related to 271 women among couples seeking divorce who visited counseling centers in the city of Babol indicated that 154 participants (56.83%) were aged between 31–40 years, while 117 participants (43.17%) were aged over 40. Regarding employment status, 131 participants (48.34%) were employed in office jobs, 93 participants (34.32%) were homemakers, and 47 participants (17.34%) were self-employed. In terms of educational attainment, 130 participants (47.97%) held a bachelor's degree, 78 participants (27.28%) held a high school diploma or associate's degree, and 63 participants (23.25%) had a master's degree or higher. Regarding the duration of marriage, 96 participants (35.42%) had been married for 5–10 years, 127 participants (46.86%) for 11–15 years, and 48 participants (17.71%) for over 15 years. Concerning the number of children, 129 participants (47.60%) had one child, 103 participants (38.01%) had two children, and 39 participants (14.39%) had three or more children.

**Table 1***Mean, Standard Deviation, and Number of Participants Across Research Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD	Max	Min	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-efficacy	13.24	5.03	24	6	0.671	-0.794
Resilience	25.48	3.62	31	17	-0.454	-0.719
Hope	20.05	4.34	30	10	-0.394	-0.216
Optimism	6.90	1.39	14	6	1.998	0.564
Psychological capital	94.82	3.04	139	59	-0.368	-1.334
Difficulty identifying emotions	26.76	5.33	34	15	-0.831	-0.541
Difficulty describing emotions	21.51	3.30	25	14	-0.832	-0.519
Externally oriented thinking	27.08	5.36	35	15	-0.831	-0.445
Alexithymia	75.27	2.78	99	45	-1.007	-0.271
Emotional divorce	16.67	4.173	24	10	-0.270	-1.327
Connection with existential source	24.13	6.18	38	15	0.398	1.227
Spiritual life	25.39	6.15	45	17	0.483	0.624
Spiritual intelligence	49.51	4.02	83	32	0.423	1.059

As shown in Table 1, within the domain of psychological capital, the highest mean score belonged to resilience ( $M = 25.48$ ), while the lowest mean was found in optimism ( $M = 6.90$ ). Among alexithymia subscales, the highest mean was observed in difficulty identifying emotions ( $M = 26.76$ ), and

the lowest was in difficulty describing emotions ( $M = 21.51$ ). Regarding spiritual intelligence, the highest mean was in spiritual life ( $M = 25.39$ ), and the lowest was in connection with the existential source ( $M = 24.13$ ). The mean score for emotional divorce was 16.67.

**Table 2***Pearson Correlation Coefficients Among Study Variables*

Var.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	1											
2	*0.163	1										
3	**0.311	**0.333	1									
4	*0.177	**0.224	**0.159	1								
5	**0.667	**0.198	**0.348	**0.305	1							
6	**0.380	**0.473	**0.318	**0.199	**0.366	1						
7	*0.136	**0.480	**0.384	**0.287	*0.151	**0.564	1					
8	**0.386	**0.440	**0.496	**0.409	**0.213	**0.595	**0.541	1				
9	**0.208	**0.174	**0.460	**0.712	**0.449	**0.213	**0.417	**0.236	1			
10	**0.687	**0.196	**0.610	**0.311	**0.569	**0.363	*0.139	**0.277	**0.190	1		
11	**0.521	**0.236	**0.417	**0.304	**0.570	**0.376	**0.406	**0.236	**0.402	**0.402	1	
12	**0.476	**0.221	**0.404	**0.315	**0.643	**0.428	**0.310	**0.443	**0.375	**0.475	**0.575	1
13	**0.424	*0.141	**0.243	**0.191	**0.476	**0.353	**0.315	**0.332	**0.380	**0.452	**0.372	**0.623

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ 

1. Self-efficacy, 2. Resilience, 3. Hope, 4. Optimism, 5. Psychological Capital, 6. Difficulty Identifying Emotions, 7. Difficulty Describing Emotions, 8. Externally Oriented Thinking, 9. Alexithymia, 10. Connection with Existential Source, 11. Spiritual Life, 12. Spiritual Intelligence, 13. Emotional Divorce.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis in Table 2 revealed the following statistically significant relationships:

- A positive and significant correlation between psychological capital and spiritual intelligence ( $r = 0.543$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

- A negative and significant correlation between alexithymia and spiritual intelligence ( $r = -0.531$ ,  $p < .01$ ).



- A negative and significant correlation between psychological capital and emotional divorce ( $r = -0.476, p < .01$ ).
- A positive and significant correlation between alexithymia and emotional divorce ( $r = 0.380, p < .01$ ).
- A negative and significant correlation between spiritual intelligence and emotional divorce ( $r = -0.623, p < .01$ ).

Before conducting data analysis using the statistical method of path analysis, the assumptions of multivariate normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and independence of errors were first verified. To assess the normality of data, skewness and kurtosis tests were used. Given that the skewness and kurtosis statistics for all research variables were between  $-2$  and  $+2$ , the assumption of normal distribution was confirmed.

To examine multicollinearity, the tolerance statistic and variance inflation factor (VIF) were used. For all variables, the VIF was less than 10, and the tolerance statistic was greater than 0.1, indicating that the assumption of no multicollinearity was satisfied. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson test was employed to examine the assumption of independence of errors. The value obtained in this study was 2.14, which falls within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, thereby confirming the assumption of independence of residuals.

Given that the assumptions were met, the model fit was assessed using fit indices. Path analysis was used to evaluate the proposed model of the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce, mediated by spiritual intelligence, among couples seeking divorce. The proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Table 3**

*Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Model*

Fit Indices	Value	Criterion	Interpretation
Absolute Fit			
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	192.46	—	—
Degrees of Freedom (df)	68	—	—
Significance Level	.001	< .05	Acceptable
$\chi^2/df$ Ratio	2.67	< 3	Good Fit
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	0.912	> 0.90	Good Fit
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI)	0.861	> 0.85	Good Fit
Comparative Fit			
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.934	> 0.90	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.922	> 0.90	Good Fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.920	> 0.90	Good Fit
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.927	> 0.90	Good Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.918	> 0.90	Good Fit
Parsimonious Fit			
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.032	< 0.10	Good Fit
Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	0.669	> 0.50	Good Fit
Parsimonious Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI)	0.677	> 0.50	Good Fit

The results in Table 3 indicate that the chi-square value is 192.46 with 68 degrees of freedom. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is 2.67, which is below 3, indicating an excellent model fit. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is 0.912, showing an acceptable fit. The Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.861, which exceeds the 0.85

threshold, indicating a satisfactory fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.032, which is below 0.10, confirming the model's adequacy.

Additional fit indices support these results: NFI = 0.918, TLI = 0.927, CFI = 0.920, and RFI = 0.934, all of which exceed 0.90 and confirm the model's appropriateness.

Given the above findings and the quantitative indicators of fit, the theoretical model of the study is acceptable. Thus, the relationships within the model and the regression coefficients between the latent variables can be interpreted. The p-value was used to test the hypotheses. A relationship

is considered statistically significant if its p-value is less than .05.

Therefore, the model examining the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce, mediated by spiritual intelligence, among couples seeking divorce, demonstrates an acceptable level of fit.

**Table 4**

*Standardized Path Coefficients for Direct Effects Between Research Variables in the Model*

Path	Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	Critical Ratio (CR)	Significance Level (p)
Psychological Capital $\rightarrow$ Spiritual Intelligence	0.543	0.317	6.52	0.0005
Alexithymia $\rightarrow$ Spiritual Intelligence	-0.531	0.380	-6.51	0.0005
Psychological Capital $\rightarrow$ Emotional Divorce	-0.476	0.235	-5.45	0.0005
Alexithymia $\rightarrow$ Emotional Divorce	0.380	0.307	4.36	0.0005
Spiritual Intelligence $\rightarrow$ Emotional Divorce	-0.623	0.350	-7.60	0.0005

The findings in Table 4 show that there is a significant direct relationship between psychological capital and spiritual intelligence ( $\beta = 0.543$ ;  $p < .01$ ); a significant negative direct relationship between alexithymia and spiritual intelligence ( $\beta = -0.531$ ;  $p < .01$ ); a significant negative direct relationship between psychological capital

and emotional divorce ( $\beta = -0.476$ ;  $p < .01$ ); a significant positive direct relationship between alexithymia and emotional divorce ( $\beta = 0.380$ ;  $p < .01$ ); and a significant negative direct relationship between spiritual intelligence and emotional divorce ( $\beta = -0.623$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 5**

*Bootstrap Results for Indirect and Mediated Pathways*

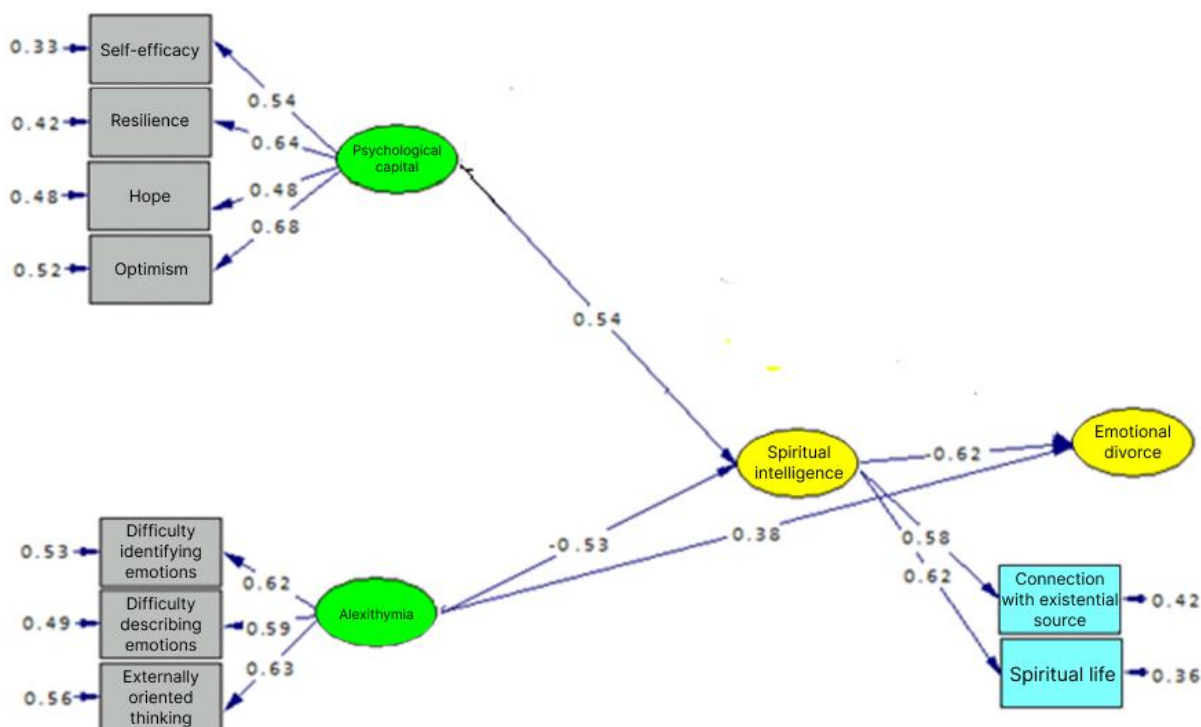
Exogenous Variable	Mediator Variable	Endogenous Variable	Estimate ( $\beta$ )	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Significance Level (p)	Confidence Interval
Psychological Capital	Spiritual Intelligence	Emotional Divorce	-0.460	0.126	0.102	0.001	95%
Alexithymia	Spiritual Intelligence	Emotional Divorce	-0.461	0.240	0.131	0.006	95%

The confidence intervals in Table 5 indicate that the indirect path between psychological capital and emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence ( $\beta = -0.460$ ) is statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Similarly, the indirect path between alexithymia and

emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence ( $\beta = -0.461$ ) is statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level. These indirect effects are considered significant because zero does not fall within the confidence intervals, confirming the mediation effects in both pathways.

**Figure 1**

*Model with Beta Coefficients*



Chi-Square= 192.46, df=68, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.032

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the model fit of the relationship between psychological capital and alexithymia with emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence in couples seeking divorce. The findings indicated that psychological capital negatively and indirectly affects emotional divorce through spiritual intelligence.

Regarding the relationship between psychological capital and emotional divorce, the results of this study are consistent with the prior findings (Kim et al., 2019; Santisi et al., 2020) which showed that psychological capital—through its components of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy—plays a significant role in life satisfaction and psychological well-being. This finding can be interpreted

through the positive qualities inherent in psychological capital. Strengthening elements such as hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism can reduce the sense of helplessness in couples and enhance their coping abilities. Consequently, individuals become less vulnerable to life stressors, experience higher life quality, and, in turn, greater life satisfaction, thereby reducing the likelihood of emotional divorce.

Psychological capital and its components encourage individuals to embrace challenges, persist in the face of adversity, and accept life's realities more easily. When faced with distress, failures, or conflict, such individuals are more likely to adopt a positive outlook. Those with higher psychological capital also tend to have stronger group interactions, which leads to increased social participation



and broader support networks—both of which contribute to greater psychological well-being and marital satisfaction, and thus lower the risk of emotional divorce.

Regarding the relationship between spiritual intelligence and emotional divorce, the findings are consistent with the prior results (Semalpour Babaahmadi et al., 2021; Sheikh Zeyn al-Din et al., 2018). Sheikhejad et al. (2018) identified a correlation between spiritual intelligence and emotional divorce. Theoretically, individuals with high spiritual intelligence perceive life as meaningful and purposeful. Because they interpret events within the broader context of life's meaning, they are less likely to fall into despair when facing incompatibilities and more likely to cope with challenges effectively (Sheikh Zeyn al-Din et al., 2018).

Spiritual intelligence enables individuals to reframe and reinterpret their experiences. This process can phenomenologically attribute greater meaning and personal value to events, allowing spouses to perceive marital conflicts as solvable problems rather than catastrophic failures. Successfully resolving such challenges together can increase self-efficacy and marital intimacy, instead of driving partners apart and exacerbating emotional divorce. This explanation is supported by the prior findings (Kaur & Singh, 2013; Malmir et al., 2016) who confirmed the association between spiritual intelligence and life satisfaction, asserting that spiritual intelligence can enhance life satisfaction in individuals. Furthermore, studies (Mohammadi et al., 2014; Mousavi Moghadam et al., 2015; Narimani et al., 2015; Sadeghi et al., 2014) showed that individuals with higher levels of spiritual well-being tend to experience greater marital satisfaction.

Aligned with the present study's findings, the relationship between psychological capital and spiritual intelligence in individuals seeking divorce can be explained through approaches in positive psychology and spiritual psychology. Psychological capital, composed of four components—hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—functions as a dynamic and internal resource. These components play a critical role in coping with life stressors, including marital conflict and divorce crises. Spiritual intelligence, on the other hand, is the capacity to utilize spiritual resources to comprehend and resolve existential issues, create meaning in life, and attain inner peace. Individuals with high spiritual intelligence are able to analyze emotional crises within a broader framework of meaning and purpose and are thus less likely to experience psychological turmoil. Among divorce-seeking individuals, who often grapple with emotions such as failure, frustration, meaninglessness, and despair,

psychological capital can act as a motivational force for psychological reconstruction, while spiritual intelligence helps them reinterpret the divorce experience as an opportunity for personal growth and life redefinition. Studies have shown a significant positive relationship between these two constructs, suggesting that higher spiritual intelligence is associated with enhanced psychological capital and vice versa.

This study also revealed that alexithymia has an indirect and negative effect on emotional divorce through the mediation of spiritual intelligence. The finding regarding the relationship between alexithymia and emotional divorce aligns with the prior results (Nosrat Talab Haghi & Bakhshipur, 2022; Yelsma & Marrow, 2003) who demonstrated that alexithymia is a predictor and facilitator of emotional divorce. In the same context, Yelsma and Marrow (2003) examined the association between alexithymia and marital satisfaction, concluding that low emotional expression in either spouse negatively impacts the other's marital satisfaction (Yelsma & Marrow, 2003). Guvensel et al. (2018) also found a significant positive relationship between alexithymia and marital conflict (Guvensel et al., 2018). According to Wells et al. (2016), difficulty in processing facial emotional expressions such as anger, fear, and sadness, and slow processing of negative emotions in others, are among the factors contributing to marital dissatisfaction in individuals with alexithymia (Wells et al., 2016).

Alexithymia, defined as an emotional-cognitive phenomenon, involves specific disruptions in psychological functioning, typically resulting from automatic inhibition of emotional information. Individuals with alexithymia are unable to express emotions due to limited emotional awareness and impaired cognitive processing of both their own and others' feelings. Consequently, they struggle to identify, comprehend, or describe emotions and demonstrate limited adaptability to stress. In spousal relationships, the emotional and affective dimensions are crucial. Spouses generally desire to view each other as their primary source of emotional support and attention. This requires the ability to recognize and regulate one's own emotions as well as to perceive the emotional states of the partner. People with alexithymia often exhibit weak empathy and fail to meet their partner's emotional needs, which can impair family functioning and increase emotional divorce.

Another factor that may influence emotional divorce is spiritual intelligence. In fact, spiritual intelligence is an empowering construct that enhances concentration and

attention—capacities that other forms of intelligence may not provide. Spiritual intelligence facilitates rapid access to elevated wisdom and knowledge, enabling the pursuit of transcendence. It creates extraordinary capacities within individuals, allowing them to apply spirituality practically. Noble and Vaughan identified eight components of advanced spiritual intelligence: integrity, clarity, humility, compassion, generosity, tolerance, perseverance, and a willingness to meet others' needs. These components clearly contribute to empathy, improved marital communication, and enhanced psychological capital, ultimately improving family functioning and reducing emotional divorce.

In line with the present study's findings, the relationship between alexithymia and spiritual intelligence in divorce-seeking individuals can be explained by recognizing that alexithymia is a major factor in interpersonal difficulties, particularly in intimate and marital relationships. Divorce-seeking individuals often exist in a context of unresolved conflicts and communication failures, where high levels of alexithymia may be a key contributing factor. Such individuals typically struggle to identify or express emotions, leading to misunderstanding, emotional distancing, and increased relational tension. In contrast, spiritual intelligence—as the capacity to understand and apply meaning-based constructs in life—includes existential awareness, deep self-knowledge, and the ability to find meaning in suffering and crisis. Individuals with high spiritual intelligence generally exhibit greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and acceptance. Thus, it is expected that higher spiritual intelligence can reduce alexithymia, as those with deeper understanding of themselves and the world are more likely to recognize and express their emotions. Existing studies have confirmed this inverse and significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and alexithymia.

Every research study has its limitations, and this study was no exception. Moderation analysis was not performed, despite the potential influence of unmeasured or overlooked variables that might affect the relationships among the study's constructs. It is recommended that couples counseling workshops be organized with a focus on enhancing spiritual intelligence, strengthening components of psychological capital, and reducing alexithymia. Such interventions may help reduce emotional divorce and promote more informed decision-making about intimate relationships.

## Authors' Contributions

This article is derived from the doctoral dissertation of the first author at the Tabriz Branch of Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran. Authors contributed equally to this article.

## Declaration

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

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. It has received ethical approval with the code IR.IAU.TABRIZ.REC.1402.314 from the Research Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch

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