

Predicting Marital Conflict Based on Mindfulness, Communication Patterns, and Emotional Intelligence in Married Students

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

Section:

Family and Couple Therapy

How to cite this article:

Kardan, J., Biglaryan, F., & Mohammadi Achacheloi, R. (2026). Predicting Marital Conflict Based on Mindfulness, Communication Patterns, and Emotional Intelligence in Married Students. *KMAN Conseling and Psychology Nexus*, 4, 1-10.

<http://doi.org/10.61838/kman.fct.psynexus.5332>



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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to predict marital conflict based on mindfulness, communication patterns, and emotional intelligence among married students.

Methods and Materials: The present study employed an applied descriptive-correlational design. The statistical population consisted of all married students at Islamic Azad University during the 2024–2025 academic year. Using convenience sampling, 195 participants were initially selected, and after excluding incomplete questionnaires, data from 180 participants were analyzed. Data collection instruments included the Marital Conflicts Questionnaire developed by Barati and Sanaei (1996), the short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (2006), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire developed by Christensen and Sullaway (1984), and the Schering Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (1995). Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis in SPSS. The results indicated that mindfulness ($r = -0.278$, $p < .001$), constructive mutual communication patterns ($r = -0.216$, $p < .01$), and emotional intelligence ($r = -0.162$, $p < .05$) were significantly and negatively associated with marital conflict. In contrast, demand/withdraw communication patterns ($r = 0.151$, $p < .05$) and mutual avoidance communication patterns ($r = 0.155$, $p < .05$) showed significant positive relationships with marital conflict. Furthermore, the regression analysis demonstrated that mindfulness ($\beta = -0.166$, $p < .05$), demand/withdraw communication pattern ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < .05$), constructive mutual communication pattern ($\beta = -0.166$, $p < .05$), mutual avoidance communication pattern ($\beta = 0.386$, $p < .001$), and emotional intelligence ($\beta = -0.338$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted marital conflict. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 9.925$, $p < .001$) and explained 20% of the variance in marital conflict among married students (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.200$). The findings suggest that mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and constructive communication patterns function as protective factors against marital conflict among married students, whereas maladaptive communication patterns such as demand/withdraw interactions and mutual avoidance increase the likelihood of relational tension.

Keywords: marital conflict, mindfulness, communication patterns, emotional intelligence, married students

1. Introduction

Marriage is regarded as one of the most significant social institutions and plays a central role in promoting psychological well-being, emotional stability, and social cohesion. The quality of marital relationships substantially influences individual mental health, family functioning, and broader societal outcomes. Nevertheless, marital relationships are frequently accompanied by various forms of interpersonal tension and disagreement that may gradually evolve into marital conflict. Marital conflict refers to persistent patterns of disagreement, emotional tension, ineffective interaction, and dissatisfaction between spouses that disrupt relational harmony and reduce marital adjustment (Bahramian et al., 2024; Sadeghi et al., 2022). In contemporary societies, rapid social, educational, and economic transformations have increased psychological pressures on couples and intensified the complexity of marital interactions. Among different populations, married university students constitute a particularly vulnerable group because they are simultaneously confronted with academic responsibilities, financial pressures, role ambiguity, and marital expectations (Shahmoradi et al., 2021). These simultaneous demands may increase emotional strain and contribute to higher levels of marital conflict.

Marital conflict has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of emotional distress, marital dissatisfaction, reduced intimacy, and family instability. Previous studies have shown that unresolved marital conflict is associated with anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, diminished quality of life, and increased risk of emotional separation or divorce (Sharafati & Eltiamjoo, 2025; Uhlich et al., 2022). Moreover, persistent conflict negatively affects interpersonal trust, emotional security, and effective communication between spouses. Researchers have increasingly emphasized that marital conflict should not merely be viewed as an isolated relational phenomenon but rather as a multidimensional process shaped by cognitive, emotional, and communicational variables (Asgarzadeh et al., 2024; Bahramian et al., 2024). Accordingly, understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying marital conflict has become a major focus within family psychology and marital research.

One of the variables that has recently attracted considerable attention in psychological and marital research is mindfulness. Mindfulness refers to purposeful, present-centered, and nonjudgmental awareness of one's internal experiences and external environment (Ryan & Brown,

2003). Individuals with high levels of mindfulness tend to observe thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal interactions with greater acceptance and reduced impulsivity. This capacity facilitates emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and adaptive coping in stressful situations. Mindfulness is considered a protective psychological resource that enables individuals to respond to relational tensions more calmly and constructively (Jankowski & Bak, 2019). In marital relationships, mindfulness may reduce emotional reactivity, enhance empathy, and promote more constructive communication patterns between spouses.

The theoretical foundations of mindfulness emphasize awareness and acceptance as key components of healthy interpersonal functioning. According to Ryan and Brown, mindfulness increases individuals' capacity for self-regulation and enhances psychological well-being by reducing automatic emotional reactions (Ryan & Brown, 2003). In close relationships, mindful individuals are more likely to remain emotionally present during interactions and less likely to engage in hostile or avoidant communication patterns. Jankowski and Bak reported that mindfulness mediates the relationship between anxiety and cognitive failures, suggesting that mindfulness improves attentional control and emotional management (Jankowski & Bak, 2019). These characteristics may directly influence the quality of marital interactions and decrease the likelihood of destructive conflicts.

Empirical evidence also supports the relationship between mindfulness and relational adjustment. Babaei Nadinluye et al. demonstrated that mindfulness significantly predicts emotional adjustment and adaptive emotional functioning (Babaei Nadinluye et al., 2017). Similarly, Mandal and Lip found that mindfulness was positively associated with relationship quality and constructive conflict resolution strategies among romantic partners (Mandal & Lip, 2022). Kalhor et al. further reported that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy significantly reduced inefficient attitudes and marital burnout among women experiencing marital conflict (Kalhor et al., 2020). More recently, Asgarzadeh et al. showed that mindfulness was negatively associated with marital conflict and maladaptive cognitive patterns, highlighting its role as a protective factor in marital functioning (Asgarzadeh et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that mindfulness may contribute substantially to reducing relational tension and improving marital adjustment.

In addition to mindfulness, communication patterns have been identified as a fundamental determinant of marital

quality and conflict resolution. Communication patterns refer to recurring ways in which spouses exchange thoughts, emotions, and behavioral responses during interpersonal interactions (Rahbari et al., 2021). Effective communication enables couples to express needs, resolve disagreements, and maintain emotional intimacy, whereas dysfunctional communication patterns intensify misunderstandings and relational dissatisfaction. Communication theories emphasize that marital stability depends not only on the presence of disagreements but also on the manner in which couples manage and communicate during conflicts (Bahramian et al., 2024).

Among the most widely studied communication patterns in marital relationships are constructive mutual communication, demand/withdraw communication, and mutual avoidance. Constructive mutual communication involves open discussion, emotional support, collaborative problem solving, and reciprocal understanding between partners. In contrast, demand/withdraw communication occurs when one spouse pressures, criticizes, or demands change while the other withdraws emotionally or physically from the interaction. Mutual avoidance refers to situations in which both spouses avoid discussing conflicts and suppress emotional expression (Li & Johnson, 2025; Rahbari et al., 2021). These maladaptive patterns reduce emotional intimacy and increase unresolved tensions within marital relationships.

Research findings consistently indicate that dysfunctional communication patterns are associated with higher levels of marital conflict and reduced relationship satisfaction. Rahbari et al., through a qualitative investigation of women with marital conflict, reported that ineffective communication, emotional withdrawal, and avoidance behaviors were among the central themes underlying relational dissatisfaction (Rahbari et al., 2021). Bahramian et al. also found significant relationships between communication patterns, irrational beliefs, and marital conflicts, demonstrating that maladaptive communication strategies intensify interpersonal tension between spouses (Bahramian et al., 2024). Furthermore, Li and Johnson revealed that demand/withdraw communication patterns moderated the association between depression and relationship satisfaction, indicating that ineffective communication may amplify emotional distress within couples (Li & Johnson, 2025). These findings emphasize the importance of communication patterns as critical predictors of marital functioning.

Another important psychological factor associated with marital conflict is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and appropriately express emotions in oneself and others (Evans et al., 2020). Individuals with higher emotional intelligence typically demonstrate greater empathy, emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal competence. These abilities facilitate adaptive responses during interpersonal disagreements and reduce the likelihood of destructive emotional reactions. Emotional intelligence is therefore considered an essential component of healthy marital functioning and relational satisfaction.

The conceptualization of emotional intelligence has evolved considerably in contemporary psychology. Evans et al. conceptualized emotional intelligence as a second-stratum factor of intelligence that contributes to adaptive functioning across social and emotional contexts (Evans et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence encompasses multiple competencies, including self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, and social skills, all of which are directly relevant to marital interactions. Spouses with higher emotional intelligence are generally more capable of recognizing emotional cues, responding empathetically, and managing conflicts constructively. Conversely, deficits in emotional intelligence may lead to impulsive reactions, poor communication, and heightened relational tension.

Numerous studies have confirmed the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital outcomes. Sadeghi et al. reported that emotional intelligence significantly predicted marital conflicts and played an important role in relational differentiation and marital adjustment (Sadeghi et al., 2022). Navabinejad et al. further demonstrated that emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between marital conflicts and tendencies toward marital infidelity, indicating that emotional competencies may protect couples from destructive relational outcomes (Navabinejad et al., 2023). Sharafati and Eltiamjoo also found that emotional intelligence was negatively associated with emotional divorce and marital conflict among married women (Sharafati & Eltiamjoo, 2025). Similarly, Frye et al. emphasized the importance of emotional regulation in moderating the relationship between marital conflict and marital satisfaction among both first-married and remarried couples (Frye et al., 2020). These findings collectively highlight the protective role of emotional intelligence in marital relationships.

The experiences of married students deserve particular attention because this population encounters unique

developmental and relational challenges. Married students often experience role overload due to the simultaneous management of academic responsibilities, marital obligations, financial concerns, and future career planning. Shahmoradi et al. reported that married students frequently experience psychological pressure arising from balancing educational demands with marital life (Shahmoradi et al., 2021). Such pressures may reduce emotional availability, impair communication quality, and increase the likelihood of marital conflict. Consequently, identifying the psychological and interpersonal factors that contribute to marital adjustment in this population is of considerable practical importance.

Although previous studies have separately examined mindfulness, communication patterns, and emotional intelligence in relation to marital functioning, limited research has simultaneously investigated the predictive roles of these variables among married students. Moreover, most previous investigations have focused on clinical or general populations rather than university students experiencing the combined pressures of education and marriage. Considering the multidimensional nature of marital conflict, it is essential to examine cognitive, emotional, and communicational variables together in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of marital dynamics. Such investigations may contribute to the development of preventive interventions, counseling programs, and educational strategies aimed at improving marital quality among young couples.

Given the increasing prevalence of marital tensions among young adults and the psychological significance of marital stability, investigating the factors associated with marital conflict among married students appears necessary. Therefore, the present study aimed to predict marital conflict based on mindfulness, communication patterns, and emotional intelligence among married students.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was an applied descriptive-correlational investigation. The statistical population consisted of all married students at Islamic Azad University during the 2024–2025 academic year. In determining the sample size, the recommendation proposed by James Stevens for multiple regression analysis using the ordinary least squares method was applied, according to which at least 10 to 20 participants should be considered for each predictor variable (Hooman, 2019). Based on this criterion, 19

participants were considered for each variable in the present study, and the sample size was estimated at 171 individuals. Considering participant attrition and incomplete questionnaires, 195 individuals were selected through convenience sampling as the research sample. After collecting the questionnaires and excluding 15 incomplete questionnaires, 180 questionnaires were ultimately analyzed ($n = 180$).

2.2. Measures

Barati and Sanaei's Marital Conflicts Questionnaire (1996): This questionnaire was developed by Barati and Sanaei (1996) and consists of 42 items assessing seven domains of marital conflict, including reduced cooperation, reduced sexual relationship, increased emotional reactions, increased relationship with one's own relatives, reduced relationship with spouse's relatives, separation of financial affairs, increased attraction of child support, and total marital conflicts. The scores for each item range from 1 to 5, and the total questionnaire score ranges from 42 to 210. The reliability of this instrument reported by Barati (1996) ranged from 0.52 to 0.69. The items are scored using a Likert scale. Lower scores indicate normal marital conflict, whereas higher scores reflect greater conflict severity.

Short Form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (2006): The short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory has been extensively studied and psychometrically evaluated across various cultures (Ghasemi Jobaneh et al., 2015). Walach et al. (2001) originally designed the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory with 30 items. Subsequently, Walach et al. (2006) developed the short form consisting of 14 items, which is more suitable for use in the general population. The long form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory is more appropriate for groups familiar with Buddhist culture and meditation practices, whereas the short form is more suitable for populations with limited familiarity with the Buddhist foundations of mindfulness. The short form can therefore be used across different cultures and adequately covers all dimensions of mindfulness (Ghasemi et al., 2015; Walach et al., 2006). For scoring purposes, participants respond to the items using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "rarely" (1) to "almost always" (4). Item 13 is reverse scored. The minimum and maximum possible scores are 14 and 56, respectively, with higher scores indicating greater mindfulness. In a domestic study conducted by Ghasemi Jobaneh et al. (2015), the short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory was translated

into Persian, and its validity and reliability were evaluated. Reliability coefficients were calculated using Cronbach's alpha, ordinal theta, and test-retest methods. Validity was assessed through concurrent validity and confirmatory factor analysis (Ghasemi Jobaneh et al., 2015). To evaluate concurrent validity, the short form of the Tangney Self-Control Scale and the emotional regulation subscale of the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test were used. Overall, correlations between the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory short form and the self-control and emotional regulation scales were reported as 0.69 and 0.68, respectively, at the 0.01 significance level. The results of confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the questionnaire structure had acceptable model fit with the data and possessed satisfactory factorial validity. All goodness-of-fit indices confirmed the overall model for the sample participants, and the proposed single-factor structure was supported. Furthermore, the results indicated that the short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory had acceptable and sufficient reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92, ordinal theta coefficient of 0.93, and a four-week test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.83. Overall, the questionnaire maintained its structure without modification or deletion of items, and its satisfactory reliability and validity coefficients, brevity, and ease of administration facilitate its extensive use by researchers. Therefore, the short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory demonstrates appropriate validity and reliability in the Iranian population and can be applied in educational and research settings, providing opportunities for numerous psychological studies (Ghasemi et al., 2015). In the present study, the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.86.

Christensen and Sullaway Communication Patterns Questionnaire (1984): This questionnaire was developed by Christensen and Sullaway (1984) at the University of California to assess reciprocal communication patterns among couples. The questionnaire consists of 32 items rated on a 3-point scale ranging from "very unlikely" (1) to "very likely" (3). The questionnaire describes spouses' behaviors across three stages of marital conflict. These stages include: first, the period when a problem arises in the marital relationship, which consists of 5 items rated on a 3-point scale; second, the period during which the communication problem is discussed, consisting of 13 items; and third, the period after discussing the communication problem, also consisting of 13 items. The questionnaire includes three subscales: constructive mutual communication, mutual avoidance, and demand/withdraw communication

(Bahramian et al., 2025). In Iran, Ebadatpour (2000) assessed the validity of this questionnaire by examining correlations between its subscales and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire. The obtained correlation coefficients for the three subscales of constructive mutual communication (five items), mutual avoidance communication, and demand/withdraw communication were 0.58, -0.58, and -0.35, respectively, all of which were significant at the 0.01 alpha level. In the present study, the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.83.

Schering Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (1995): This questionnaire was developed by Schering (1995). The original questionnaire consisted of 70 items; however, it was later revised by Mansouri (2011), and after standardization in Iran, it was reduced to 33 items. The questionnaire is scored on a 5-point Likert scale and includes five subscales: self-motivation, self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness or empathy, and social skills. The questionnaire was standardized in Iran, and its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha method was reported as 0.85. In evaluating construct validity, previous studies reported a correlation coefficient of 0.63, and the internal consistency of the test measured by Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.84 (Sadeghi et al., 2022). In the present study, the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.78.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using parametric statistical tests, including Pearson's correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis in IBM SPSS Statistics.

3. Findings and Results

Examination of the demographic characteristics indicated that 13.9% of the sample consisted of married male students and 86.1% consisted of married female students. Regarding age distribution, the highest percentage of the sample belonged to women aged 25–35 years (62.8%), whereas the lowest percentage belonged to men aged 45–55 years (2.8%). In terms of marriage duration, the range between two and five years had the highest frequency (58.3%). Regarding educational level, the highest frequency was related to master's degree students (73.2%), whereas the lowest frequency (2.3%) was related to associate degree students. To analyze the data, Pearson's correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis were employed. Initially, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to examine the normality of score distributions. According to the results of

the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the significance levels for marital conflict, mindfulness, demand/withdraw communication pattern, constructive mutual communication pattern, mutual avoidance communication pattern, and

emotional intelligence were 0.055, 0.200, 0.074, 0.200, 0.068, and 0.200, respectively, indicating that these variables followed a normal distribution. The results of the data analyses are presented in the following tables.

Table 1

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Marital Conflict, Mindfulness, Communication Patterns, and Emotional Intelligence

Variable	Mindfulness	Demand/Withdraw Communication Pattern	Constructive Mutual Communication Pattern	Mutual Avoidance Communication Pattern	Emotional Intelligence
Marital Conflict	-0.278***	0.151*	-0.216**	0.155*	-0.162*

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

According to the results presented in Table 1, the calculated correlation coefficients were statistically significant at the p < .05 level. These findings indicate that mindfulness, demand/withdraw communication pattern, constructive mutual communication pattern, mutual avoidance communication pattern, and emotional intelligence were significantly associated with marital conflict. Specifically, mindfulness, constructive mutual

communication pattern, and emotional intelligence showed significant negative relationships with marital conflict, with coefficients of -0.278, -0.216, and -0.162, respectively. In contrast, demand/withdraw communication pattern and mutual avoidance communication pattern demonstrated significant positive relationships with marital conflict, with coefficients of 0.151 and 0.155, respectively.

Table 2

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Predicting Marital Conflict Based on Mindfulness, Communication Patterns, and Emotional Intelligence

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	17459.238	5	3491.847	9.925	.001
Residual	61212.251	174	351.794		
Total	78671.490	179			

Predictor Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	103.496	10.327	—	10.021	.001
Mindfulness	-0.307	0.138	-0.166	-2.227	.027
Demand/Withdraw Communication Pattern	0.711	0.341	0.154	2.088	.038
Constructive Mutual Communication Pattern	-0.550	0.266	-0.166	-2.068	.040
Mutual Avoidance Communication Pattern	0.740	0.173	0.386	4.281	.001
Emotional Intelligence	-0.730	0.199	-0.338	-3.677	.001

R = 0.471; Adjusted R² = 0.200

To determine the role of mindfulness, demand/withdraw communication pattern, constructive mutual communication pattern, mutual avoidance communication pattern, and emotional intelligence as predictor variables, with marital conflict as the criterion variable, these variables were entered into the regression equation. As shown in Table 2, the observed F value was statistically significant (p < .001), and 20% of the variance in marital conflict among married students was explained by the studied variables. Based on the beta coefficients, mindfulness (-0.166), demand/withdraw communication pattern (0.154), constructive mutual communication pattern (-0.166), mutual

avoidance communication pattern (0.386), and emotional intelligence (-0.338) significantly predicted changes in marital conflict among married students.

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim of predicting marital conflict based on mindfulness, communication patterns, and emotional intelligence among married students. The findings demonstrated that mindfulness, constructive mutual communication patterns, and emotional intelligence were negatively associated with

marital conflict, whereas demand/withdraw communication patterns and mutual avoidance communication patterns were positively associated with marital conflict. Furthermore, the results of multivariate regression analysis indicated that mindfulness, communication patterns, and emotional intelligence significantly predicted marital conflict and jointly explained approximately 20% of the variance in marital conflict among married students. These findings emphasize the multidimensional nature of marital conflict and indicate that cognitive-emotional and communicational variables play an important role in shaping the quality of marital relationships among married students.

One of the major findings of the study was the inverse relationship between mindfulness and marital conflict. This finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of mindfulness experience lower levels of interpersonal tension, emotional reactivity, and relational dissatisfaction within marriage. Mindfulness enables individuals to become more aware of their emotions, thoughts, and behavioral responses in stressful situations and reduces impulsive reactions during interpersonal disagreements. From a psychological perspective, mindfulness promotes acceptance, emotional regulation, attentional control, and present-centered awareness, which facilitate more adaptive responses to marital stressors (Ryan & Brown, 2003). Consequently, mindful individuals are more capable of responding to disagreements with calmness and understanding rather than hostility or emotional withdrawal.

The present finding is consistent with the results reported by Asgarzadeh et al., who found that mindfulness was negatively associated with marital conflict and maladaptive cognitive schemas (Asgarzadeh et al., 2024). Similarly, Kalhor et al. demonstrated that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy reduced inefficient attitudes and marital burnout among women with marital conflict (Kalhor et al., 2020). Mandal and Lip also reported that mindfulness was positively associated with relationship quality and constructive conflict resolution strategies among couples (Mandal & Lip, 2022). Furthermore, Babaei Nadinluye et al. emphasized the role of mindfulness in emotional adjustment and adaptive psychological functioning (Babaei Nadinluye et al., 2017). These converging findings support the idea that mindfulness contributes to healthier marital functioning by increasing emotional awareness and reducing automatic negative reactions during interpersonal interactions.

Another important finding of the present study was the negative relationship between constructive mutual communication patterns and marital conflict. This finding

indicates that couples who engage in open discussion, mutual support, collaborative problem-solving, and reciprocal understanding experience lower levels of marital tension and dissatisfaction. Constructive communication allows spouses to express emotions and needs effectively while simultaneously validating each other's perspectives. Such communication patterns strengthen emotional intimacy and reduce the likelihood of unresolved interpersonal tensions. In marital relationships, communication serves as the primary mechanism through which couples negotiate disagreements and maintain relational stability.

The findings of the present study align with previous research emphasizing the role of communication quality in marital adjustment. Bahramian et al. found that constructive communication patterns were associated with lower marital conflict and healthier interpersonal functioning (Bahramian et al., 2024). Rahbari et al. also reported that ineffective communication patterns were central factors underlying marital dissatisfaction among women experiencing marital conflict (Rahbari et al., 2021). Theoretically, constructive communication enhances relational transparency, emotional safety, and empathy between spouses, thereby reducing misunderstanding and emotional escalation. Couples who use constructive communication strategies are generally more willing to negotiate differences and collaboratively manage stressors, which ultimately improves marital stability and satisfaction.

In contrast, the present study found that demand/withdraw communication patterns and mutual avoidance communication patterns were positively associated with marital conflict. This finding indicates that dysfunctional communication styles intensify interpersonal dissatisfaction and emotional distance between spouses. In demand/withdraw communication, one partner pressures or criticizes while the other emotionally withdraws or avoids confrontation. This cyclical interaction pattern often increases frustration, resentment, and unresolved conflict. Similarly, mutual avoidance prevents couples from openly discussing problems and inhibits effective emotional expression, thereby contributing to emotional disconnection and relational instability.

These findings are highly consistent with prior empirical evidence. Li and Johnson reported that demand/withdraw communication patterns significantly moderated the relationship between depressive symptoms and relationship satisfaction, suggesting that maladaptive communication patterns amplify emotional distress within marital relationships (Li & Johnson, 2025). Rahbari et al. similarly

identified emotional withdrawal and avoidance as central characteristics of dysfunctional marital interactions (Rahbari et al., 2021). Bahramian et al. also demonstrated that maladaptive communication patterns were significantly associated with marital conflicts and irrational beliefs (Bahramian et al., 2024). From a theoretical perspective, maladaptive communication patterns disrupt emotional reciprocity and reduce opportunities for constructive problem resolution. Over time, repeated cycles of criticism, withdrawal, and avoidance may erode trust, intimacy, and emotional connection between spouses, thereby increasing the likelihood of chronic marital conflict.

Another significant finding of the study was the inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflict. This finding suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence possess greater abilities in emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal management, which reduce the occurrence and intensity of marital conflict. Emotional intelligence enables spouses to recognize emotional cues accurately, regulate negative emotions effectively, and communicate feelings in adaptive ways. These competencies facilitate emotional understanding and reduce hostile reactions during disagreements.

The findings are supported by previous studies examining the role of emotional intelligence in marital relationships. Sadeghi et al. found that emotional intelligence significantly predicted marital conflicts and contributed to relational differentiation and marital adjustment (Sadeghi et al., 2022). Navabinejad et al. reported that emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between marital conflict and tendencies toward marital infidelity, indicating its protective role in maintaining relational stability (Navabinejad et al., 2023). Sharafati and Eltiamjoo further demonstrated that emotional intelligence was negatively associated with emotional divorce and marital conflict among married women (Sharafati & Eltiamjoo, 2025). In addition, Evans et al. conceptualized emotional intelligence as a higher-order cognitive-emotional capacity associated with adaptive social functioning (Evans et al., 2020). These findings collectively suggest that emotional intelligence enhances couples' abilities to manage interpersonal stressors and maintain emotional balance during relational conflicts.

The regression findings of the present study further revealed that mindfulness, communication patterns, and emotional intelligence jointly explained approximately 20% of the variance in marital conflict. Although this percentage indicates that other factors also contribute to marital conflict,

the findings demonstrate that these psychological and interpersonal variables play a meaningful role in predicting relational functioning among married students. The simultaneous influence of these variables highlights the complex and multidimensional nature of marital relationships. Marital conflict cannot be explained solely through demographic or situational factors; rather, cognitive awareness, emotional competencies, and communication behaviors interact dynamically to shape relational outcomes.

The findings may also be interpreted in light of the unique experiences of married students. Married students often experience multiple simultaneous stressors, including academic responsibilities, financial concerns, role strain, and uncertainty regarding future career and family plans. Shahmoradi et al. reported that married students frequently encounter psychological pressures associated with balancing educational demands and marital responsibilities (Shahmoradi et al., 2021). Such stressors may increase emotional sensitivity and reduce relational tolerance, thereby intensifying marital conflicts. Under these conditions, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and constructive communication patterns may function as protective resources that enhance psychological resilience and interpersonal adaptability.

Furthermore, the findings can be understood within broader relational and psychological frameworks. Mindfulness contributes to emotional awareness and reduces reactive behaviors, emotional intelligence enhances adaptive emotional processing and interpersonal sensitivity, and constructive communication patterns facilitate effective problem-solving and emotional connection. Together, these variables promote healthier relational dynamics and reduce destructive interaction patterns. Conversely, maladaptive communication patterns such as withdrawal and avoidance prevent emotional resolution and reinforce interpersonal dissatisfaction. Therefore, marital conflict appears to emerge not merely from external stressors but also from the ways individuals cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally respond to relational challenges.

The present findings also underscore the importance of integrating psychological interventions into marital counseling and educational programs for students. Interventions focused on mindfulness training may improve emotional regulation and attentional awareness, thereby reducing impulsive and hostile interactions between spouses. Similarly, emotional intelligence training may strengthen empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal competence, while communication skills programs may

promote constructive dialogue and collaborative conflict resolution. Because married students represent a population exposed to multiple developmental and educational pressures, preventive and supportive interventions targeting these variables may significantly improve marital adjustment and psychological well-being.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the present study indicate that mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and constructive communication patterns function as protective factors against marital conflict, whereas maladaptive communication patterns such as demand/withdraw interactions and mutual avoidance increase the likelihood of relational tension among married students. These findings contribute to the growing literature emphasizing the importance of emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal processes in marital functioning and provide empirical support for the development of multidimensional approaches to marital counseling and intervention.

One of the limitations of the present study was the use of a correlational design, which restricts causal interpretation of the findings. In addition, the study relied exclusively on self-report questionnaires, which may have increased the likelihood of response bias and social desirability effects. The sample was also limited to married students from a single university, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to other populations and cultural contexts. Furthermore, demographic and contextual variables such as socioeconomic status, duration of marriage, personality traits, and family background were not examined in detail and may have influenced the observed relationships.

Future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal and experimental designs to examine the causal relationships among mindfulness, communication patterns, emotional intelligence, and marital conflict. Researchers may also investigate the mediating and moderating roles of additional variables such as attachment styles, coping strategies, personality characteristics, and psychological resilience. Comparative studies across different cultural, educational, and socioeconomic groups may further clarify the generalizability of the findings. In addition, qualitative investigations may provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of married students and the interpersonal mechanisms underlying marital conflict.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest the importance of implementing counseling and educational

programs aimed at strengthening mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and constructive communication skills among married students. Universities and counseling centers may develop workshops and intervention programs focusing on emotional regulation, empathy enhancement, conflict management, and effective communication strategies. Providing psychological support services specifically designed for married students may also help reduce relational stress and improve marital adjustment. Moreover, integrating preventive marital education into student support programs could contribute to promoting healthier and more stable marital relationships among young couples.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed 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.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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