

# The Mediating Role of Communication Beliefs in the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Emotional Empathy with Marital Stability in Women

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to determine the role of personality traits and emotional empathy in women's marital stability, with the mediating role of communication beliefs. The research method was descriptive-correlational, and the statistical population included all married women residing in Tehran in 2026. Among them, 180 participants were selected using convenience sampling and completed the NEO Personality Inventory developed by McCrae and Costa (1985), the Emotional Empathy Scale by Mehrabian and Epstein (1972), the Relationship Beliefs Inventory by Eidelson and Epstein (1982), and the Marital Stability Questionnaire by Edwards and Johnson (1980). Data were analyzed using SPSS-27 and AMOS-24 software through path analysis. The results indicated that among personality traits, agreeableness and neuroticism had a positive and significant relationship with marital stability. In contrast, openness to experience had a negative and significant relationship with marital stability. Emotional empathy had a negative and significant effect on marital stability, and communication beliefs played a significant mediating role in the relationship between personality traits and marital stability. The findings suggest that marital stability is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing a combination of personality, emotional, and cognitive factors and cannot be attributed to a single factor alone.

**Keywords:** Personality traits, emotional empathy, communication beliefs, marital stability, married women in Tehran

## 1. Introduction

Marital stability is considered one of the most important indicators of family functioning and psychological well-being in contemporary societies. Stable marital relationships provide emotional security, psychological support, and social cohesion for couples and

their children, whereas marital instability is associated with emotional distress, interpersonal conflict, reduced quality of life, and increased rates of separation and divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). In recent decades, the increasing prevalence of marital conflicts and divorce has attracted considerable attention from psychologists, counselors, and family researchers. Divorce is not merely a private issue

between spouses; rather, it exerts broad psychological, economic, and social consequences on families and communities (Ojen, 2025). The family constitutes the fundamental unit of society, and instability within marital relationships may undermine social development and individual well-being. Suvonova emphasized that family stability is influenced by a combination of emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, and personality-related variables that interact dynamically within the marital system (Suvonova, 2025). Consequently, identifying the psychological factors associated with marital stability is essential for the development of preventive and therapeutic interventions aimed at strengthening family relationships.

Researchers have increasingly focused on personality traits as major determinants of marital quality and stability. Personality traits influence the way individuals perceive interpersonal situations, regulate emotions, communicate with partners, and cope with marital stressors (Corey, 2013). Among the theoretical frameworks explaining personality, the Five-Factor Model has received extensive empirical support. This model conceptualizes personality in terms of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These traits shape emotional responses, interpersonal interactions, and patterns of communication in intimate relationships. Karney and Bradbury argued that enduring personality vulnerabilities significantly affect marital adaptation over time and may predict long-term marital outcomes (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Empirical studies have consistently shown that couples with adaptive personality profiles experience higher marital satisfaction and lower levels of marital conflict. In contrast, maladaptive personality characteristics increase the probability of instability and relational dissatisfaction.

Several studies have examined the relationship between personality traits and marital stability. Afzali et al. demonstrated that certain personality traits significantly differentiate couples with high probability of divorce from those with stable marriages (Afzali et al., 2019). Rezaeifar et al. also reported that personality traits play a significant role in predicting marital stability, particularly through mechanisms such as attachment styles and problem-solving abilities (Rezaeifar et al., 2019). Similarly, Nazari et al. found that the association between personality traits and marital stability could be explained through perceived fairness in marital relationships (Nazari et al., 2020). Dada et al. showed that personality characteristics among married teachers significantly predicted marital stability and adjustment (Dada et al., 2023). Moreover, Nyamai et al.

reported that the Big Five personality traits were significantly associated with marital satisfaction among couples in Kenya, suggesting the cross-cultural relevance of personality in intimate relationships (Nyamai et al., 2024). Ye et al. further emphasized that similarity in personality and values between partners contributes to relationship satisfaction and relational harmony (Ye et al., 2013). These findings collectively indicate that personality traits are important predictors of marital outcomes and may influence couples' ability to maintain stable relationships over time.

Among personality traits, neuroticism has been repeatedly associated with poorer marital outcomes. Individuals high in neuroticism often experience emotional instability, anxiety, irritability, and heightened sensitivity to stress, all of which may contribute to interpersonal tensions and marital dissatisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Conversely, agreeableness and conscientiousness are generally linked with greater empathy, cooperation, emotional regulation, and commitment within relationships. Extraversion may facilitate emotional expressiveness and social interaction, whereas openness to experience can have both positive and negative implications depending on the relational context (Corey, 2013). Shah Noush Foroushani et al. found that personality traits indirectly affect marital stability through emotional intelligence, suggesting that emotional processes may mediate the impact of personality on marital outcomes (Shah Noush Foroushani et al., 2022). Odebumi and Obi similarly demonstrated that personality traits influence marital satisfaction through mediating psychological and interpersonal mechanisms among academic staff members (Odebumi & Obi, 2025). These findings suggest that the relationship between personality and marital stability is complex and may operate through emotional and cognitive variables.

One of the most important emotional variables associated with successful marital relationships is empathy. Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share another person's emotional experiences and perspectives. It enables individuals to respond sensitively to their partners' needs and feelings, thereby enhancing emotional intimacy and reducing interpersonal conflict (Sills, 2002). Emotional empathy, in particular, involves affective responsiveness to another person's emotional state and plays a central role in close interpersonal relationships. Couples who demonstrate higher levels of empathy are generally more capable of constructive communication, conflict resolution, and emotional support. Alaeddin et al. showed that inducing cognitive and affective empathy among newlywed couples

reduced overt conflict behaviors and improved perceptions of conflict outcomes (Alaeddin et al., 2018). Farajpour also reported that marital empathy was positively associated with marital stability and that emotional expressiveness mediated this relationship (Farajpour, 2019). Similarly, Pavlenko highlighted the strong interconnection between empathy and the quality of marital relations, emphasizing that empathic responsiveness contributes to emotional closeness and relational resilience (Pavlenko, 2024). Carasso and Karpas further found that empathy moderates the association between marital strain and emotional intimacy among middle-aged couples, indicating its protective role in marital functioning (Carasso & Karpas, 2024).

Although empathy generally contributes positively to marital functioning, some studies suggest that excessive emotional involvement and over-identification with a partner's distress may also increase emotional burden and psychological exhaustion within relationships. Highly empathic individuals may become emotionally overwhelmed by their partner's negative emotions, leading to increased vulnerability to stress and relational dissatisfaction. Therefore, the relationship between emotional empathy and marital stability may not always be linear and may depend on cognitive interpretations and communication processes within the relationship (Sills, 2002). This perspective highlights the importance of examining mediating cognitive factors that shape the influence of empathy and personality traits on marital outcomes.

One such cognitive factor is communication beliefs. Communication beliefs refer to individuals' assumptions, expectations, and cognitive schemas regarding interpersonal relationships and marital interactions. These beliefs influence how spouses interpret their partner's behaviors, evaluate conflicts, and respond to relational challenges (Corey, 2013). Dysfunctional communication beliefs may include assumptions such as "partners should automatically know each other's needs," "disagreement is destructive," or "people cannot change." Such irrational beliefs can intensify misunderstandings, reduce emotional intimacy, and contribute to marital instability. Shahrestani et al. found that communication beliefs significantly predicted marital satisfaction among women seeking divorce and normal women, indicating the central role of cognitive interpretations in marital functioning (Shahrestani et al., 2012). Rahimi also demonstrated that communication beliefs were significant predictors of marital happiness among married male teachers (Rahimi, 2021). Hayati

reported that communication patterns and maladaptive schemas were associated with marital stability through emotional expressiveness and conflict resolution styles (Hayati, 2022). These findings suggest that communication beliefs may act as cognitive mechanisms through which personality traits and emotional variables affect marital outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, cognitive-behavioral approaches emphasize that individuals' interpretations and beliefs significantly influence emotional and behavioral responses within intimate relationships (Corey, 2013). Individuals with maladaptive personality characteristics may develop dysfunctional communication beliefs that distort interpersonal perceptions and intensify marital conflicts. Likewise, emotional empathy may influence marital stability differently depending on the cognitive frameworks through which emotional experiences are interpreted. Couples who possess flexible and adaptive communication beliefs may utilize empathy constructively, whereas those with irrational communication beliefs may experience greater misunderstanding and relational distress. Lawrence et al. argued that marital happiness and relationship quality are strongly associated with broader indicators of health and longevity, emphasizing the importance of understanding the psychological processes underlying marital functioning (Lawrence et al., 2019). Joudaki also emphasized the importance of interpersonal investment and commitment processes in predicting marital success and failure (Joudaki, 2021). Furthermore, Moslemi demonstrated that psychological and emotional difficulties can contribute to marital instability through mediating relational processes (Moslemi, 2017).

Despite the growing body of research on marital relationships, several gaps remain in the literature. First, many previous studies have examined personality traits, empathy, or communication beliefs independently rather than within an integrated explanatory model. Second, limited attention has been paid to the mediating role of communication beliefs in the relationship between personality traits, emotional empathy, and marital stability. Third, relatively few studies have focused specifically on married women within the sociocultural context of Tehran, despite the significant influence of cultural and gender-related factors on marital relationships. Given the increasing complexity of modern marital relationships and the rising rates of marital dissatisfaction and divorce, investigating the psychological mechanisms underlying marital stability remains an important research priority (Ojen, 2025;

Suvonova, 2025). Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of communication beliefs in the relationship between personality traits and emotional empathy with marital stability among married women in Tehran.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was descriptive-correlational in design. The statistical population of the study included all married women residing in Tehran who participated in this research through sports classes, parks, therapist training workshops, the Kousan Writing Etiquette Telegram channel, and the Sustainable Health Center Telegram channel during the period from April 4 to June 5, 2026. The sample size in this study consisted of 180 participants. The sample was selected from married women living in different districts of Tehran in order to ensure geographical, social, and cultural diversity. A non-random convenience sampling method was used for participant selection. The questionnaires were distributed both in person and online. Printed questionnaires were distributed in parks, sports classes, and educational workshops, while the online questionnaires were posted in Telegram channels, and married women in these groups were invited to cooperate in completing the questionnaires. Data analysis was conducted in both descriptive and inferential sections.

### 2.2. Measures

The NEO Personality Inventory developed by Costa and McCrae (1989) was used to assess personality traits. The short form of the questionnaire contains 60 items, while the long form includes 240 items. The instrument assesses the five major personality dimensions, namely neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Scoring is based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). The correlation between the short and long forms ranges from 75% for conscientiousness to 89% for neuroticism. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were 0.67, 0.58, 0.73, 0.57, and 0.69, respectively.

The Emotional Empathy Scale developed by Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) was also used. This instrument consists of 33 items, of which 17 are positively worded and 16 are

reverse-scored. Items 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, and 33 constitute the negatively worded items of the scale (e.g., "The open display of emotions among people embarrasses me"), while the remaining items are positively worded (e.g., "When I see someone who feels like a stranger in a group, I feel sad"). The items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale including completely agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, and completely disagree, receiving scores from 5 to 1, respectively. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were reported as 0.84 (Mohammadzadeh, 2015). In the present study, the reliability coefficient obtained through Cronbach's alpha was 0.75.

The Relationship Beliefs Inventory developed by Eidelson and Epstein (1982) was employed to assess irrational beliefs regarding marital relationships. This questionnaire consists of 40 items. Relationship beliefs refer to the assumptions or mental frameworks that spouses hold regarding their marital relationship, which they perceive as reality and which may create problems when used excessively. The questionnaire measures five beliefs: (a) the belief that disagreement is destructive, (b) the belief that a spouse cannot change, (c) mind-reading expectations, (d) sexual perfectionism, and (e) belief in gender differences (i.e., men and women are fundamentally different). Responses are rated on a Likert scale. Eidelson and Epstein (1982) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.81 for the subscales. The Persian version of this instrument was translated by Mazaheri and Pour-Etemad. In Mazaheri's study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was reported as 0.75, and in the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also 0.75.

The Marital Instability Index developed by Edwards et al. (1980) was used to measure marital instability, particularly proneness to divorce. This questionnaire contains 14 items. Each item is scored on a 4-point Likert scale including very often, often, sometimes, and never, with scores ranging from 4 (very often) to 1 (never). Scores ranging from 14 to 28 indicate a moderate level of marital instability (high marital stability). Scores between 28 and 42 indicate a moderate degree of marital instability (moderate marital stability). Scores between 42 and 56 indicate a high degree of marital instability (low marital stability). Edwards et al. (1980) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93 for the Marital Instability Index. In the study conducted by Rezaeifar et al. (2019), a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was reported. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.77.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

In the descriptive statistics section, mean and standard deviation were used. In the inferential statistics section, after verifying the assumptions of parametric tests, Pearson’s correlation coefficient and path analysis were employed to test the hypotheses. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS software packages.

### 3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants indicated that 25 participants (13.9%) were between 20 and 30 years old, 56 participants (31.1%) were between 30 and 40 years old, 70 participants (38.9%) were between 40 and 50 years old, and 29 participants (16.1%) were above 50 years of age. Regarding marital duration, 39 participants (21.7%) had been married for 1 to 5 years, 34 participants (18.9%) for 5 to 10 years, and 107 participants (59.4%) for more than 10 years.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Participants*

Demographic Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20–30 years	25	13.9
	30–40 years	56	31.1
	40–50 years	70	38.9
	Above 50 years	29	16.1
	Total	180	100.0
Marital Duration	1–5 years	39	21.7
	5–10 years	34	18.9
	More than 10 years	107	59.4
	Total	180	100.0

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants, including age and marital duration.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Indices of Personality Traits, Emotional Empathy, Marital Stability, and Communication Beliefs*

No.	Scale	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Emotional Empathy	100.75	7.86	78	129	0.68	0.04
2	Neuroticism	33.58	5.51	16	52	0.43	0.17
3	Extraversion	39.57	4.44	26	51	0.46	-0.23
4	Openness to Experience	34.98	3.64	26	46	0.41	0.33
5	Agreeableness	37.33	4.87	27	52	-0.15	0.42
6	Conscientiousness	41.69	3.23	29	56	3.83	-0.43
7	Marital Stability	22.50	7.22	14	51	1.85	1.22
8	Communication Beliefs	100.38	15.62	45	139	0.20	-0.25

Table 2 presents the descriptive indices of personality traits, emotional empathy, marital stability, and communication beliefs. The results showed that the highest mean score belonged to emotional empathy (M = 100.75),

while the lowest mean score was related to marital stability (M = 22.50). The skewness and kurtosis values indicated that the distributions of the variables were within an acceptable range for parametric analyses.

**Table 3**

*Correlation Matrix of Personality Traits and Emotional Empathy with Marital Stability in Women*

Variables	r	p
Agreeableness and Marital Stability	0.30**	0.01
Neuroticism and Marital Stability	0.24**	0.01
Openness to Experience and Marital Stability	-0.21**	0.01
Emotional Empathy and Marital Stability	-0.16**	0.01
Extraversion and Marital Stability	-0.001	ns
Conscientiousness and Marital Stability	-0.07	ns

\*\*p<0.01

According to Table 3, the results of Pearson’s correlation coefficient matrix indicated that agreeableness ( $r = 0.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and neuroticism ( $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ) had significant positive relationships with marital stability. In contrast, openness to experience ( $r = -0.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and emotional

empathy ( $r = -0.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ) showed significant negative relationships with marital stability. However, no significant relationships were observed between extraversion ( $r = -0.001$ ) and marital stability or between conscientiousness ( $r = -0.07$ ) and marital stability.

**Table 4**

*Regression Analysis Predicting Marital Stability Based on Personality Traits and Emotional Empathy*

Research Variables	B	$\beta$	S.E.	t	p
Agreeableness → Marital Stability	0.41	0.27	0.11	3.62	< .001
Openness to Experience → Marital Stability	-0.35	-0.17	0.14	-2.35	0.018
Extraversion → Marital Stability	0.18	-0.11	0.13	-1.38	0.167
Communication Beliefs → Marital Stability	-0.05	-0.12	0.03	-1.59	0.110
Conscientiousness → Marital Stability	-0.22	-0.09	0.18	-1.23	0.219
Neuroticism → Marital Stability	0.14	0.10	0.10	1.43	0.152
Emotional Empathy → Marital Stability	-0.16	-0.17	0.06	-2.42	0.015

Table 4 demonstrates that the simultaneous regression analysis identified agreeableness, openness to experience, and emotional empathy as significant predictors of marital

stability. Specifically, agreeableness positively predicted marital stability, whereas openness to experience and emotional empathy negatively predicted marital stability.

**Table 5**

*Indirect Effects of Personality Traits and Emotional Empathy on Women’s Marital Stability Through the Mediation of Communication Beliefs*

Predictor Variable	Mediator Variable	Criterion Variable	Estimate	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Significance
Emotional Empathy	Communication Beliefs	Marital Stability	0.02	0.05	0.003	0.04
Neuroticism	Communication Beliefs	Marital Stability	0.03	0.08	0.007	0.05
Extraversion	Communication Beliefs	Marital Stability	0.01	0.07	-0.007	0.27
Agreeableness	Communication Beliefs	Marital Stability	0.02	0.11	0.007	0.04

Table 5 indicates that the indirect effect of emotional empathy on marital stability was significant ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). Additionally, the indirect effect of neuroticism on marital stability was significant ( $\beta = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ), and the indirect effect of agreeableness on marital stability was also significant ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). These indirect effects

occurred through communication beliefs as the mediating variable. In contrast, the indirect effect of extraversion on marital stability was not significant ( $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.27$ ), because its confidence interval included zero (-0.007 to 0.07).

**Table 6**

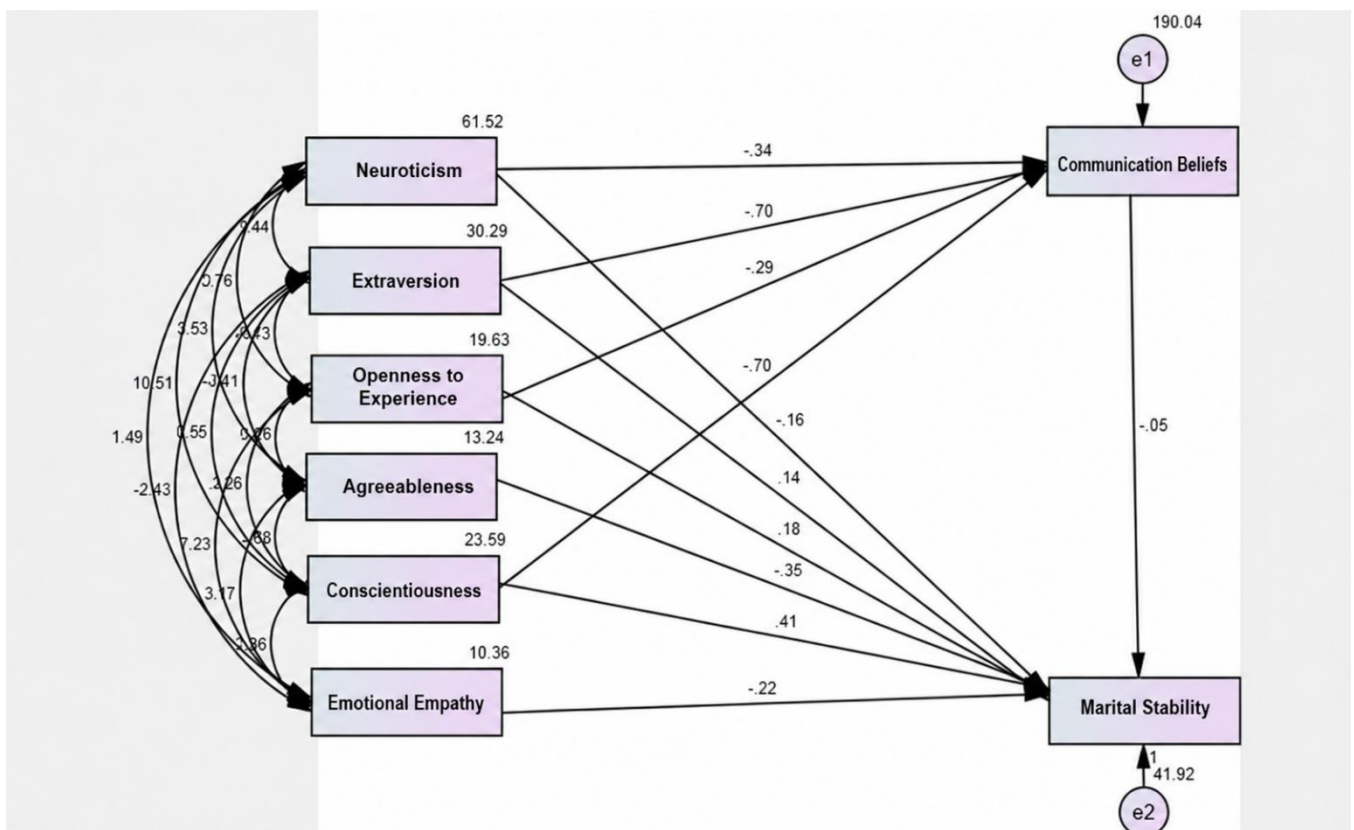
*Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Predictive Model of Women’s Marital Stability*

Fit Index	Symbol	Estimate
Chi-square	$\chi^2$	5.12
Degrees of Freedom	df	2
Chi-square/df Ratio	$\chi^2/df$	0.523
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	1.00
Goodness-of-Fit Index	GFI	0.99
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	AGFI	0.97
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	0.01

Based on the goodness-of-fit indices reported in Table 6, the predictive model of marital stability in women demonstrated a desirable level of fit.

**Figure 1**

*Final Research Model Obtained Through AMOS Software.*



**4. Discussion**

The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of communication beliefs in the relationship between personality traits and emotional empathy with marital stability among married women in Tehran. The findings demonstrated that agreeableness and neuroticism had

positive and significant relationships with marital stability, whereas openness to experience and emotional empathy had negative and significant relationships with marital stability. In addition, communication beliefs played a significant mediating role in the relationship between some personality traits and marital stability. These findings indicate that marital stability is not merely influenced by external or situational factors, but rather emerges from a complex

interaction of personality characteristics, emotional processes, and cognitive interpretations within marital relationships. The findings support theoretical perspectives emphasizing the multidimensional nature of marital functioning and suggest that cognitive and emotional variables jointly influence relational stability (Corey, 2013; Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

One of the important findings of the present study was the positive and significant relationship between agreeableness and marital stability. Individuals high in agreeableness are generally characterized by empathy, cooperation, tolerance, flexibility, and concern for others' well-being. Such individuals are more likely to resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively and maintain harmonious interactions with their spouses. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that adaptive personality traits are associated with more stable and satisfying marital relationships (Afzali et al., 2019; Dada et al., 2023). Rezaeifar et al. also reported that personality characteristics influence marital stability through interpersonal and emotional mechanisms (Rezaeifar et al., 2019). Similarly, Nyamai et al. found that agreeableness contributes positively to marital satisfaction among couples, suggesting that cooperative interpersonal styles enhance emotional intimacy and relational adjustment (Nyamai et al., 2024). From a theoretical perspective, individuals with high agreeableness are less likely to engage in hostile communication patterns and are more willing to compromise during conflicts, thereby increasing the likelihood of long-term marital stability (Corey, 2013). The positive effect of agreeableness observed in the current study may therefore reflect the capacity of agreeable individuals to foster emotional support, trust, and constructive communication within marriage.

Another finding of the study was the positive relationship between neuroticism and marital stability. Although this finding appears inconsistent with many previous studies that identified neuroticism as a risk factor for marital dissatisfaction and instability, it may be interpreted within the specific sociocultural context of the present sample. Individuals high in neuroticism often demonstrate heightened emotional sensitivity and vigilance regarding relational issues. In some cultural contexts, such emotional involvement may increase efforts to preserve the relationship despite emotional distress. Nevertheless, many previous studies have identified neuroticism as negatively associated with marital quality because emotionally unstable individuals are more vulnerable to anxiety, anger, and

maladaptive coping responses (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Afzali et al. reported that neurotic traits were associated with higher probability of divorce (Afzali et al., 2019), and Shah Noush Foroushani et al. found that emotional processes mediate the relationship between personality traits and marital stability (Shah Noush Foroushani et al., 2022). The discrepancy between the current findings and previous literature may be attributable to differences in cultural norms, sample characteristics, or interpretations of marital commitment among Iranian women. It is also possible that emotionally sensitive individuals remain highly invested in preserving marital relationships despite experiencing emotional tension.

The findings further revealed that openness to experience had a negative and significant relationship with marital stability. Individuals with high openness are often characterized by curiosity, independence, unconventional thinking, and a desire for novelty and personal growth. Although these qualities may contribute positively to creativity and adaptability, they may also reduce adherence to traditional marital expectations and increase dissatisfaction with routine relational structures. This finding aligns with studies suggesting that certain personality characteristics may undermine relational stability when they conflict with conventional marital roles and expectations (Ye et al., 2013). Ye et al. emphasized that compatibility in personality traits and values between partners contributes significantly to relationship satisfaction and stability (Ye et al., 2013). Individuals high in openness may seek continuous novelty and autonomy, which could potentially create tension in marital relationships characterized by rigid expectations or traditional gender roles. In the sociocultural context of Tehran, where family cohesion and role expectations remain important, openness to experience may sometimes generate discrepancies between personal aspirations and marital obligations, thereby reducing relational stability.

Another important finding was the negative relationship between emotional empathy and marital stability. Although empathy is generally regarded as a positive interpersonal characteristic, the present findings suggest that excessive emotional empathy may sometimes contribute to relational distress. Highly empathic individuals may become emotionally overinvolved in their partner's suffering, resulting in emotional exhaustion, heightened sensitivity to conflict, and psychological burden. This finding partially contrasts with previous research indicating positive associations between empathy and marital quality (Carasso

& Karpas, 2024; Pavlenko, 2024). Sills argued that empathy can improve marital satisfaction by enhancing emotional understanding and intimacy, but excessive empathic involvement may also create emotional vulnerability within relationships (Sills, 2002). Alaeddin et al. found that empathy reduced overt conflict behaviors among newlywed couples (Alaeddin et al., 2018), while Farajpour reported that marital empathy contributed positively to marital stability through emotional expressiveness (Farajpour, 2019). The contradictory nature of these findings may indicate that empathy functions differently depending on contextual and cognitive variables. In the present study, it is possible that emotional empathy without effective emotional regulation or adaptive communication strategies increased emotional strain rather than enhancing relational satisfaction.

One of the central findings of the study was the mediating role of communication beliefs in the relationship between personality traits and marital stability. Specifically, communication beliefs mediated the effects of emotional empathy, neuroticism, and agreeableness on marital stability. This finding highlights the importance of cognitive schemas and interpersonal interpretations in shaping marital outcomes. Communication beliefs influence how spouses perceive disagreements, interpret their partner's intentions, and evaluate relational challenges. Individuals with maladaptive beliefs may perceive conflicts as threatening or irreversible, thereby intensifying relational dissatisfaction and instability (Rahimi, 2021). Shahrestani et al. reported that dysfunctional communication beliefs significantly predicted marital dissatisfaction among women seeking divorce (Shahrestani et al., 2012). Hayati also demonstrated that communication patterns and maladaptive schemas affect marital stability through emotional expressiveness and conflict resolution processes (Hayati, 2022). The current findings support cognitive-behavioral perspectives suggesting that interpersonal outcomes are influenced not only by emotional and personality factors, but also by the cognitive interpretations individuals attach to relational experiences (Corey, 2013).

The mediating role of communication beliefs can also be understood through the interaction between cognition and emotion in intimate relationships. Individuals high in agreeableness may develop more adaptive communication beliefs characterized by trust, flexibility, and constructive conflict resolution, thereby increasing marital stability. Conversely, emotionally vulnerable individuals with neurotic tendencies may interpret relational events

negatively and develop maladaptive communication beliefs that increase emotional distress. Odeunmi and Obi emphasized that mediating interpersonal and cognitive variables play critical roles in the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction (Odeunmi & Obi, 2025). Similarly, Shah Noush Foroushani et al. highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence as a mediating mechanism linking personality traits to marital stability (Shah Noush Foroushani et al., 2022). The present findings extend previous research by demonstrating that communication beliefs constitute another important mediating mechanism through which personality and emotional factors influence marital outcomes.

The overall findings of this study emphasize the multidimensional nature of marital stability. Marital relationships are influenced simultaneously by enduring personality characteristics, emotional responsiveness, cognitive schemas, and communication processes. Suvonova argued that family stability emerges from the interaction of multiple psychological and social factors rather than a single determinant (Suvonova, 2025). Likewise, Lawrence et al. demonstrated that marital happiness and stability are associated with broader indicators of physical and psychological well-being (Lawrence et al., 2019). Joudaki emphasized the role of commitment and interpersonal investment in determining marital success and failure (Joudaki, 2021). Furthermore, Moslemi showed that emotional and psychological difficulties contribute to marital instability through relational and emotional processes (Moslemi, 2017). Taken together, these findings suggest that effective interventions aimed at improving marital stability should address personality-related vulnerabilities, emotional regulation skills, and maladaptive communication beliefs simultaneously.

## 5. Conclusion

The present findings have important implications for counseling and psychotherapy. Cognitive-behavioral and emotionally focused therapeutic approaches may be particularly effective in addressing maladaptive communication beliefs and enhancing emotional awareness within marital relationships. Corey emphasized that therapeutic interventions targeting cognitive distortions and emotional communication can improve relational functioning and reduce interpersonal conflict (Corey, 2013). Carasso and Karpas similarly highlighted the buffering role

of empathy in reducing the negative impact of marital strain on emotional intimacy (Carasso & Karpas, 2024). Therefore, interventions designed to strengthen constructive communication patterns, emotional regulation abilities, and realistic relationship expectations may contribute substantially to marital stability among couples.

One limitation of the present study was the use of a convenience sampling method, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all married women or couples in other cultural and social contexts. In addition, the study relied exclusively on self-report questionnaires, making the results vulnerable to response biases such as social desirability and subjective interpretation. Another limitation was the cross-sectional design of the study, which prevents causal conclusions regarding the relationships among personality traits, emotional empathy, communication beliefs, and marital stability. Furthermore, the study focused only on married women in Tehran and did not include the perspectives of husbands or couples jointly.

Future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal and experimental designs in order to examine causal relationships among the variables more precisely. Researchers may also investigate the role of additional mediating and moderating variables such as emotional intelligence, attachment styles, conflict resolution strategies, and cultural values. Comparative studies involving couples from different socioeconomic, cultural, and regional backgrounds could provide a broader understanding of marital stability. Moreover, future research should include both spouses simultaneously in order to examine interpersonal dynamics and reciprocal influences within marital relationships more comprehensively.

The findings of the present study suggest that family counselors, psychologists, and marital therapists should pay particular attention to personality characteristics, emotional processes, and communication beliefs when working with couples experiencing relational difficulties. Educational and therapeutic programs focusing on adaptive communication skills, emotional regulation, empathy management, and cognitive restructuring may improve marital functioning and reduce the likelihood of marital instability. Premarital counseling programs may also benefit from assessing personality traits and communication beliefs in order to identify potential relational vulnerabilities before marriage. In addition, public mental health initiatives aimed at strengthening family relationships could incorporate workshops and training sessions designed to promote

constructive interpersonal communication and emotional awareness among 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.

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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.

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