

Examining the Relationship Between Psychological Abnormalities and Emotional Interactions with Emotional Divorce with the Mediating Role of Religious Beliefs in Couples with Marital Conflicts

Alireza. Faghih Tabaghdehi^{1*}, Nasibeh. Sheikhi Ghahderijani²

¹ M.A., Department of Family Counseling, Guilan University, Rasht, Iran

² M.A., Department of Psychology, Lahijan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Lahijan, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: falireza@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional interactions with emotional divorce, with the mediating role of religious beliefs in couples experiencing marital conflicts.

Methods: The research method was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population of this study included all couples visiting counseling centers in the city of Neka (Neda-e-Zendegi Counseling Center, Phoenix Counseling Center, Amin Counseling Center, Imam Ali Social Work Counseling Center, and Mental Health Counseling Center) during the first six months of 2022, totaling 686 individuals (343 couples). Using the Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample size was calculated to be 246 individuals, and through a convenience sampling method, those who were interested in participating in the study were selected as the sample. They responded to questionnaires on psychological abnormalities by Najarian and Davoodi (2001), emotional interactions of couples by Brok and Bretman (1995), emotional divorce by Gottman (1995), and religious beliefs by Najafi (2006). Data analysis was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation test, and structural equation modeling with SPSS and AMOS software.

Findings: The findings showed that psychological abnormalities had a positive effect on emotional divorce and a negative effect on religious beliefs. Additionally, emotional interactions had a negative effect on emotional divorce and a positive effect on religious beliefs. Furthermore, religious beliefs had a negative effect on emotional divorce in couples. On the other hand, the results indicated that religious beliefs played a mediating role in the relationship between psychological abnormalities, emotional interactions, and emotional divorce in couples.

Conclusion: This study highlights the indirect effect of psychological disorders and emotional interactions on emotional divorce, with religious beliefs playing a mediating role among couples experiencing marital conflicts. The findings suggest that strengthening religious beliefs may help reduce emotional divorce, emphasizing the need for interventions that promote emotional well-being and healthy marital dynamics.

Keywords: Psychological abnormalities, emotional interactions, emotional divorce, religious beliefs.

he family is the first and most unique social institution that the health and well-being of a society depend on the health and satisfaction of its members, and no institution or relationship has such a profound and enduring impact (Jeong et al., 2024). Experts believe that the family is one of the first public and universal institutional systems essential for meeting human vital and emotional needs and for the survival of society (Pellón et al., 2024). What happens within a family and its functioning can be a key factor in creating resilience and reducing the risks of current and future challenges when facing adverse events and conditions (Sumari et al., 2024). Every individual in the family they are born into addresses their needs and finds peace and comfort through it. Many family researchers consider the marital relationship as the most important family relationship and one of the fundamental determinants of a healthy family's functioning. Marriage is the origin of the family life cycle, and healthy, lasting marital relationships signify a goal-oriented system with shared beliefs. Marriage is a social contract that creates a family unit for living, reproduction, and the survival of generations. A successful and satisfying marriage leads to the stability of family functioning, the adequacy of family members in problem-solving, mental health in children, and the fulfillment of appropriate family and interpersonal roles (Kara, 2024; Masrur et al., 2024; van Berkel et al., 2024). Therefore, due to the special importance of the family, researchers are keen to discover the secrets that contribute to marital satisfaction.

Healthy relationships in society are formed based on healthy relationships within the family, and the healthier the relationships within the family, the more stability and strength the family, and consequently society, will have (Azimi Rasta & Abedzadeh Nobariyan, 2013). No society can claim health without healthy families, and none of the social harms arise without being influenced by the family (Rosuli Sani Abadi, 2015). One of the most significant family issues is divorce. Divorce is one of the most critical family issues that leads to individual, family, and social breakdown and has more negative effects on women than men (Dehghani Tafti et al., 2019). Divorce increases the susceptibility to illness (Landfeldt et al., 2018; Nielsen et al., 2014) and the risk of premature death (Sbarra et al., 2015). Moreover, research has shown that divorce is positively correlated with depression (Margaroli et al., 2017; Shafer et al., 2017; Stack & Scourfield, 2015). Additionally, divorce between spouses negatively affects the quality of life and functioning of children (Anthony et al., 2014). However, official divorce statistics do not entirely reflect the level of

marital failure, because alongside that, there is a more significant number of emotional divorces, meaning couples continue to live together but do not request a legal divorce. In fact, some marriages do not end in divorce but turn into hollow marriages devoid of love, companionship, and friendship, with the spouses merely going through the motions of family life (Azimi Rasta & Abedzadeh Nobariyan, 2013).

Emotional divorce is a situation in which the family structure is outwardly preserved, but in reality, it is empty from within, as the positive emotional relationship between the spouses has disappeared, and negative emotional interactions have taken its place. After this sense of frustration arises, spouses compare their partner before and after marriage, leading to the prevalence of negative feelings, a loss of initial enthusiasm, emotional dependency, and ultimately, emotional divorce (Parvin et al., 2014). Emotional divorce is the first stage in the process of divorce and indicates the deterioration of the marital relationship, where feelings of alienation replace it. This type of divorce symbolizes the existence of problems in healthy and proper communication between husband and wife and also involves a lack of trust, respect, and love for one another (Firoozjaiyan et al., 2016). Researchers have cited various causes for divorce and emotional divorce, including severe ideological conflicts, personality differences, cultural differences, gender differences, family differences, different upbringings, incompatible personality traits, and the insistence of both parties on imposing their own opinions (Malouff et al., 2010), early marriage (Larson & Holman, 1998), overwork, financial and economic problems, conflicts regarding marital and sexual matters, having different hobbies, pride, stubbornness, and disagreement on how to spend leisure time, and some personality traits such as selfishness, excessive desire, pride, stubbornness, novelty-seeking, low self-confidence, and low self-esteem (Bastani et al., 2016), infidelity, lack of love, and emotional problems (Chlen & Mustaffa, 2008), excessive work commitment, issues with the in-laws, extramarital sexual relations, sexual problems, lack of financial support, distrust, immaturity, lack of communication (Kołodziej-Zaleska & Przybyła-Basista, 2016), failure to meet emotional needs, neglect by the husband, communication problems, choosing the wrong spouse, lack of empathy and companionship, violent behaviors, lack of time spent together, sexual dissatisfaction, distrust, lack of responsibility, imbalance in the husband's mental health, family interference, incorrect parenting methods, living with the husband's family, the

husband's employment situation, the husband's addiction, living in a different city, and the husband's remarriage (Bastani et al., 2016). Emotional divorce is a problem that affects the very foundation of the family; despite this issue, the shared life becomes meaningless, and it becomes a suitable environment for the development of abnormalities and deviations both for its members and for the society at large (Yazdani et al., 2013). Moreover, results have shown that emotional divorce leads to an increase in various mental health problems and disorders in couples (Khusaifan & El Keshky, 2022).

Sometimes, signs of psychological abnormalities can lead to a feeling of fatigue, affect the ability to express empathy, or cause feelings of anxiety and isolation. Occasionally, these symptoms may lead to excessive dependence or even resentment. Psychological abnormalities can be defined as patterns or syndromes in the emotional and psychological domains that occur in an individual. These patterns or syndromes reflect an underlying psychological dysfunction (Marambe, 2016) and result in significant emotional or clinical distress (Rijavec Klobučar & Simonič, 2018). These syndromes are not an expected response to a general stressor, such as the loss of a loved one, nor are they a culturally validated response to a particular event (Sanchez-Ruiz et al., 2018). Psychological abnormalities stem from dysfunctions or issues in one or more domains of emotional and psychological functioning, including general functioning (e.g., awareness, orientation, intelligence, or personality) or specific functions (e.g., attention, memory, emotions, perception, and thinking), though not limited to these domains (Bechard et al., 2017). When an individual experiences difficulties in receiving and perceiving relational support from their spouse (Turner et al., 2017), it causes emotional gaps (Joo & Teng, 2017), reflecting a specific deficiency in psychological functioning and, consequently, psychological abnormalities. This leads the individual to become unable to describe or recognize their emotions and moods in their relationship with their spouse, reducing their communication, which can sometimes result in extramarital relationships (Arfaei et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be concluded that psychological abnormalities can also affect emotional interaction between spouses. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional interactions with emotional divorce, with the mediating role of religious beliefs in couples experiencing marital conflicts.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This research is fundamental in terms of purpose and descriptive in terms of data collection and analysis methods, and it is of a correlational type. The statistical population of this study includes all couples who visited counseling centers in the city of Neka (Neda-e-Zendegi Counseling Center, Qoqnoos Counseling Center, Amin Counseling Center, Imam Ali Social Work Counseling Center, and Mental Health Counseling Center) during the second half of 2022, totaling 686 individuals (343 couples).

The sample size, based on the Karajsi and Morgan table, was determined to be 246 individuals using a convenience and purposive sampling method, with individuals who were willing to participate in the study selected as the sample. In this way, 246 women who visited counseling centers in Neka were chosen as the sample, specifically those who scored highest on the research tool (Soleimani's (2013) Marital Conflict Questionnaire). The reason for using convenience sampling was that the researcher selected the participants due to their geographical proximity, availability at a specific time, or willingness to participate in the research. It is worth mentioning that out of the 246 sample individuals, 117 filled out the questionnaires in person, while 129 responded online.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Psychological Disorders

The Psychological Disorders Questionnaire consists of 25 items and is designed to assess psychological disorders. Respondents are required to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale (None (0), Slightly (1), To Some Extent (2), A Lot (3), Extremely (4)). This questionnaire was developed by Najarian and Davoodi (2001) and contains nine subscales. After summing the items, the minimum and maximum scores for an individual on the entire scale are 0 and 100, respectively. A higher score indicates a greater degree of psychological disorder. Construct and content validity were confirmed by the developers, and concurrent validity showed a significant correlation between the total score of the questionnaire and Beck's Depression Inventory (0.49) as well as Hill's Perfectionism Scale (0.66). Reliability, measured using Cronbach's alpha, was reported as 0.87 (Najarian & Davoodi, 2001). Additionally, in the research by Tahmasbi et al. (2022), the reliability of this questionnaire based on Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.75 (Tahmasbi et al., 2022).

2.2.2. Couple Emotional Interactions

The Couple Emotional Interactions Questionnaire was developed by Brooke and Bertman (1995) and contains 56 items. Respondents rate each item on a six-point Likert scale (Never (1), Very Little (2), Little (3), Average (4), Much (5), Very Much (6)). Items 1 to 14 measure intimacy, items 15 to 26 assess agreement in relationships, items 27 to 38 evaluate honesty in relationships, items 39 to 46 assess affection in relationships, and items 47 to 56 measure commitment to relationships. A higher score indicates greater emotional interaction between couples, and vice versa. This questionnaire was validated by Shalchi et al. (2020). Cronbach's alpha for intimacy, agreement, honesty, affection, commitment, and the entire test was found to be 0.75, 0.81, 0.73, 0.79, 0.77, and 0.81, respectively (Rezai et al., 2021).

2.2.3. Emotional Divorce

The Emotional Divorce Scale, developed by Gottman (1995), was translated and used for the first time in Iran by Jazayeri (2008). This scale consists of 24 items related to various aspects of life, to which respondents answer "Yes" or "No." A "Yes" response scores 1, while a "No" response scores 0. After summing the items, the minimum and maximum scores for an individual on the entire scale are 0 and 24, respectively. Scores between 0 and 8 indicate a low probability of separation, scores between 8 and 16 suggest a moderate probability, and scores above 16 indicate a high probability of emotional divorce. Thus, higher scores on this scale indicate a higher likelihood of emotional divorce. The total score on this questionnaire represents the level of emotional divorce in participants. In the original version, the reliability of the scale was reported to be above 0.70. In the Iranian version, Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was found to be 0.83. In the study by Bayat Mokhtari (2013), content validity was found to be satisfactory. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was calculated as 0.84 (Abedi et al., 2024).

2.2.4. Religious Beliefs

This test, developed by Najafi (2006), is designed to measure adherence to religious beliefs. It consists of 15 items that assess the practice (not belief or attitude) of Islamic teachings. The test items are categorized into four domains: adherence to obligations (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), recommended acts (items 7, 9, 14), religious activities (items

6, 10, 15), and the influence of religion on life decisions (items 8, 11, 12, 13). The scale used in the questionnaire is a five-point Likert scale (Very Little (1), Little (2), Somewhat (3), A Lot (4), Very Much (5)). In the study by Pourstar and Hekmati (2010), the reliability of this test was determined to be 0.76 through test-retest and 0.91 through split-half methods. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha for the test was found to be 0.94.

2.2.5. Marital Conflicts

This test, developed by Soleimani (2013), is designed to assess the level of marital conflicts in individuals and contains 42 items and 7 components, including: decreased cooperation, reduced sexual relations, increased emotional responses, increased support-seeking from children, increased individual relationships with relatives, decreased family relationships with spouse's relatives and friends, and separating financial matters. Items 3, 9, 19, 21, 27 measure decreased cooperation. Items 4, 10, 15, 28, 33 assess reduced sexual relations. Items 5, 11, 16, 22, 29, 34, 39, 41 measure increased emotional responses. Items 7, 18, 24, 31, 36 assess increased support-seeking from children. Items 12, 6, 17, 23, 30, 35 measure increased individual relationships with relatives. Items 1, 19, 25, 37, 40, 42 assess decreased family relationships with spouse's relatives and friends. Items 2, 8, 13, 20, 26, 32, 38 measure separating financial matters. Higher scores on this questionnaire indicate greater marital conflict between individuals. Dehghan conducted a norming study of the Marital Conflicts Questionnaire on a group of 30 participants and reported Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire to be 0.71 and for the seven components as follows: decreased cooperation (0.73), reduced sexual relations (0.60), increased emotional responses (0.74), increased support-seeking from children (0.81), increased individual relationships with relatives (0.65), decreased family relationships with spouse's relatives and friends (0.81) (Esmaeili et al., 2024).

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and charts) and inferential statistics (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and structural equation modeling) were used for data analysis. Additionally, SPSS and AMOS software were employed for data analysis.

3. Findings and Results

Table 1 show the descriptive indices for the research variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Indices of Research Variables

Variable	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Abnormalities	24	100	66.95	18.640
Emotional Interactions	94	290	173.27	56.355
Emotional Divorce	0	24	13.57	7.455
Religious Beliefs	20	70	44.94	11.496

In the inferential statistics section, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, also known as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, was used to examine the data distribution. Furthermore, Pearson's test was used to examine the relationships between the variables under study, and structural equation modeling (SEM) with Amos software was applied to test the research hypotheses.

Before performing statistical methods and calculating the appropriate test statistics, it is essential to select the suitable statistical method for the research. For this purpose, understanding the distribution of the data is a fundamental priority. Normal distribution implies that the distribution of variables on both sides of the mean is symmetrical, with the graph of the distribution forming a bell curve. If the variable distribution is not normal, it will deviate from the bell shape and skew to the left or right of the mean. When the distribution of variables is normal, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used to test for normality. If the significance level of this test is less than 0.05, it indicates non-normality. Conversely, if the significance level is greater than 0.05, it suggests the data of that variable are normal. In this study, based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the significance level for all variables was greater than the error level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that the distribution of the data

for the variables is normal, and parametric methods such as Pearson's test can be used.

The results in Table 2 show that there is a significant relationship between the main variables, including psychological abnormalities, emotional interactions, emotional divorce, and religious beliefs. The correlation coefficient between emotional divorce and the independent variables of psychological abnormalities (0.252) and emotional interactions (-0.157) was estimated. This indicates a positive relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce, and a negative relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce. Additionally, the correlation coefficient between religious beliefs and the independent variables of psychological abnormalities (-0.442) and emotional interactions (0.520) was estimated. This implies a negative relationship between psychological abnormalities and religious beliefs, and a positive relationship between emotional interactions and religious beliefs. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between religious beliefs and emotional divorce (-0.220) was estimated, indicating a negative relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce.

Table 2

Results of Pearson's Correlation Test Between Research Variables

Variables in the Study	Religious Beliefs	Emotional Divorce	Emotional Interactions	Psychological Abnormalities
Psychological Abnormalities	-0.442**	0.252**	-0.581**	1
Emotional Interactions	0.520**	-0.157*	1	-0.581**
Emotional Divorce	-0.220**	1	-0.157*	0.252**
Religious Beliefs	1	-0.220**	0.520**	-0.442**

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

According to Table 2, since the significance level of the test for the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce in couples is less than the error level of 0.01, it can be inferred that there is a significant

relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce in couples. Given the positive correlation values, it can be concluded that there is a positive and direct relationship between psychological abnormalities and

emotional divorce in couples. Additionally, since the significance level of the test for the relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in couples is less than the error level of 0.05, it can be inferred that there is a significant relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in couples. Due to the negative correlation values, it can be concluded that there is a negative and inverse relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in couples. Furthermore, since the significance level of the test for the relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce in couples is less than the error level of 0.01, it can be inferred that there is a significant relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce in couples. Given the negative correlation values, it can be concluded that there is a negative and inverse relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce in couples.

According to the final goodness-of-fit indices for the structural model of the study, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is 1.678. Since a value less than 3 indicates an appropriate model, the model demonstrates good fit. Also, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.053, which, being less than 0.08, indicates a good fit. Other goodness-of-fit indices include: normed fit index (NFI) = 0.953, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.934, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.935, and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.801. Given that the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is less than 3, the RMSEA is below 0.08, the normed fit index is above 0.90, the comparative fit index is above 0.90, the

incremental fit index is above 0.90, and the goodness-of-fit index is above 0.80, it can be concluded that the model is suitable, and the relationships between the variables are significant.

The results showed that psychological abnormalities have a direct effect on emotional divorce in couples. Moreover, as the path coefficient is 0.326, it can be concluded that psychological abnormalities have a positive effect on emotional divorce in couples. Emotional interactions have a direct effect on emotional divorce in couples. Since the path coefficient is -0.352, it can be concluded that emotional interactions have a negative effect on emotional divorce in couples. Psychological abnormalities have a direct effect on religious beliefs in couples. Since the path coefficient is -0.266, it can be concluded that psychological abnormalities have a negative effect on religious beliefs in couples. Emotional interactions have a direct effect on religious beliefs in couples. As the path coefficient is 0.571, it can be concluded that emotional interactions have a positive effect on religious beliefs in couples. Religious beliefs have a direct effect on emotional divorce in couples. Since the path coefficient is -0.473, it can be concluded that religious beliefs have a negative effect on emotional divorce in couples (Figure 1).

To examine the mediating role of religious beliefs in the relationship between psychopathologies, emotional interactions, and emotional divorce in couples with marital conflicts, the Baron and Kenny test is used in this study.

Table 3

Results of investigating the mediating role of religious beliefs in the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce in couples with marital conflicts

Steps of Baron & Kenny Test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Path Coefficient	t-Value	Significance Level
First Condition	Psychological Abnormalities	Emotional Divorce	0.598	5.886	0.000
Second Condition	Psychological Abnormalities	Religious Beliefs	-0.266	-3.140	0.000
Third Condition	Religious Beliefs	Emotional Divorce	-0.473	-4.221	0.000
Fourth Condition	Psychological Abnormalities	Emotional Divorce	0.326	3.242	0.005

As shown in Table 3, the significance level in the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce in the absence of the mediator variable is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The path coefficient is 0.598, and the t-value is 5.886, which is greater than 1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that psychological abnormalities influence emotional divorce, and the first condition is confirmed. The significance level, path coefficient, and t-value in the relationship between

psychological abnormalities and religious beliefs are 0.000, -0.266, and -3.140, respectively. Since the significance level is less than 0.05 and the t-value is greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that psychological abnormalities influence religious beliefs, and the second condition is confirmed. The significance level, path coefficient, and t-value in the relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce are 0.000, -0.473, and -4.221, respectively. Since the significance level is less than 0.05 and the t-value is greater

than 1.96, it can be concluded that religious beliefs influence emotional divorce, and the third condition is confirmed. The significance level in the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce in the presence of the mediator variable (religious beliefs) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The path coefficient is 0.326, and the t-value is 3.242, which is greater than 1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that psychological abnormalities influence emotional divorce in the presence of the mediator variable. Since this relationship was reduced in the presence of the mediator variable, the role of religious beliefs is mediating, and the mediating role in this section is also confirmed.

If the indirect effect is significant, but no exogenous latent variable influences the endogenous variable, the

Variance Accounted For (VAF) is relatively low. This happens when the direct effect is high, and after including the mediator variable with a significant indirect effect, the amount slightly decreases. In this situation, when the VAF is very large and above 80%, full mediation can be claimed. A situation where the VAF is between 20% and 80% is described as partial mediation. In this study, the variance accounted for is 0.278, which is 27.8%, falling between 20% and 80%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the variable of religious beliefs has a partial mediating role in the relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional divorce in couples.

Table 4

Results of investigating the mediating role of religious beliefs in the relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in couples with marital conflicts

Steps of Baron & Kenny Test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Path Coefficient	t-Value	Significance Level
First Condition	Emotional Interactions	Emotional Divorce	-0.405	-3.991	0.000
Second Condition	Emotional Interactions	Religious Beliefs	0.571	5.337	0.000
Third Condition	Religious Beliefs	Emotional Divorce	-0.473	-4.221	0.000
Fourth Condition	Emotional Interactions	Emotional Divorce	-0.352	-3.463	0.000

As shown in Table 4, the significance level in the relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in the absence of the mediator variable is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The path coefficient is -0.405, and the t-value is -3.991, which is greater than 1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that emotional interactions influence emotional divorce, and the first condition is confirmed. The significance level, path coefficient, and t-value in the relationship between emotional interactions and religious beliefs are 0.000, 0.571, and 5.337, respectively. Since the significance level is less than 0.05 and the t-value is greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that emotional interactions influence religious beliefs, and the second condition is confirmed. The significance level, path coefficient, and t-value in the relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce are 0.000, -0.473, and -4.221, respectively. Since the significance level is less than 0.05 and the t-value is greater than 1.96, it can be concluded that religious beliefs influence emotional divorce, and the third condition is confirmed. The significance level in the relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in the presence of the mediator variable (religious beliefs) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The path coefficient is -0.352, and the t-value is -3.463, which is greater than

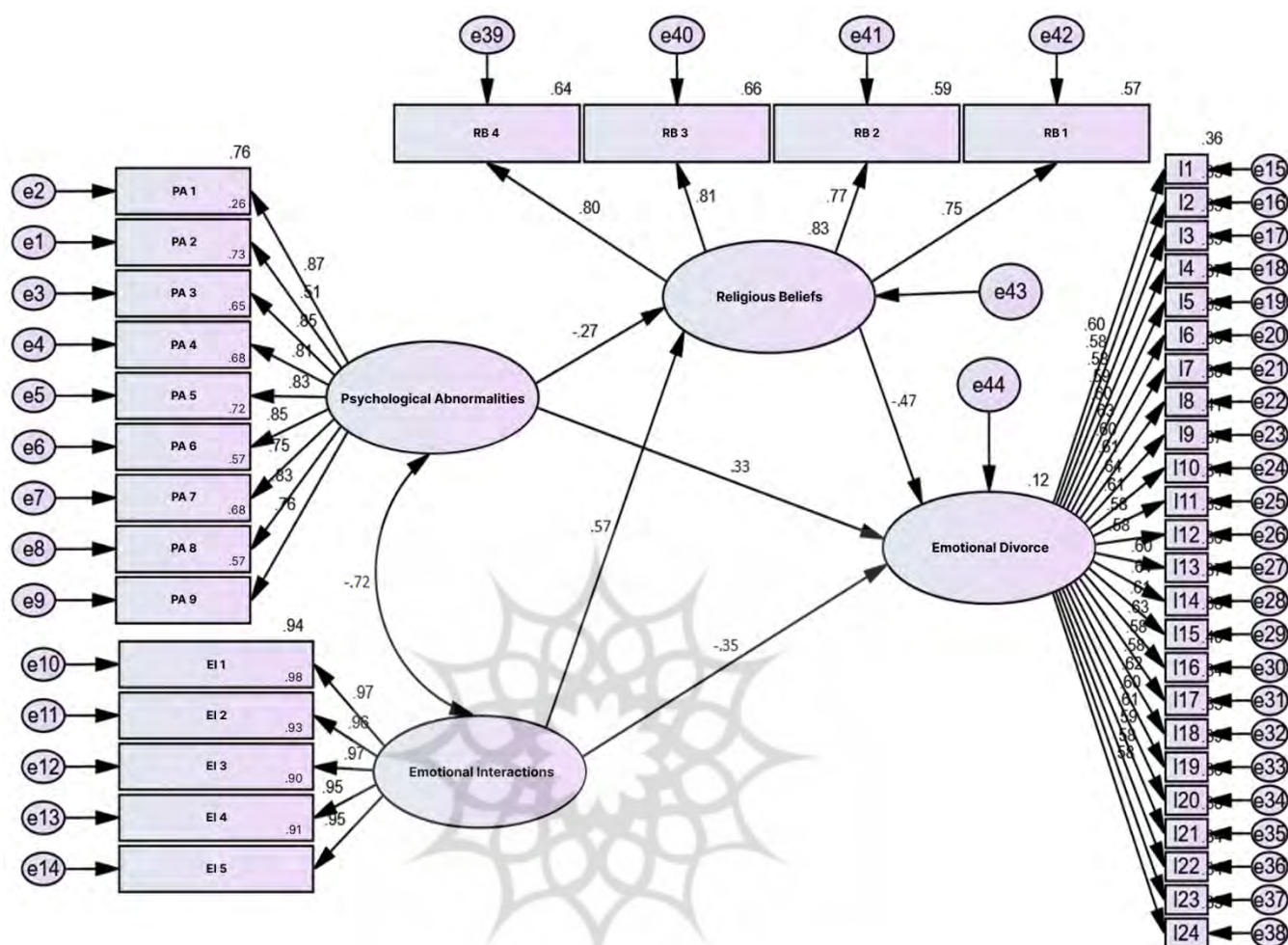
1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that emotional interactions influence emotional divorce in the presence of the mediator variable. Since this relationship was reduced in the presence of the mediator variable, the role of religious beliefs is partial mediation, and the mediating role in this section is also confirmed.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is a relationship between psychological abnormalities and emotional interactions with emotional divorce, with the mediating role of religious beliefs in couples with marital conflicts.

If the indirect effect is significant, but no exogenous latent variable influences the endogenous variable, the VAF is relatively low. This occurs when the direct effect is high, and after the inclusion of the mediator variable with a significant indirect effect, the amount slightly decreases. In this situation, when the VAF is very large and above 80%, full mediation can be claimed. A situation where the VAF is between 20% and 80% is described as partial mediation. In this study, the variance accounted for is 0.434, which is 43.4%, falling between 20% and 80%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the variable of religious beliefs has a partial mediating role in the relationship between emotional interactions and emotional divorce in couples.

Figure 1

Final Model of the Study



4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results obtained, psychological disorders and emotional interactions have an indirect effect on emotional divorce, with the mediating role of religious beliefs in couples with marital conflicts. The main hypothesis of the study was confirmed. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the family is one of the primary institutional systems that is essential for meeting the vital and emotional needs of humans and ensuring the survival of society (Mohlatole et al., 2018). The family is a social unit based on human relationships, where a man and woman freely and completely commit themselves to each other, forming an active entity known as the family (Sadeghi, 2016). One of the most important familial issues is divorce. Divorce is one of the bitter and unfortunate consequences of life, which, unfortunately, has become an increasingly

prevalent social issue in recent years (Landfeldt et al., 2018). In many cases, incompatible husbands and wives do not separate due to individual, familial, social, and cultural factors. Instead of being a nurturing, joyful, and hopeful center, the family becomes a troubled and painful land that gradually takes away and destroys the peace of its members. If family members, especially spouses, are constantly involved in issues such as prolonged silences, verbally and physically abusive interactions, emotional and physical distancing from each other, sexual dissatisfaction, and gradually decreasing self-esteem, they will encounter the main signs of a distressed family, which can be referred to as emotional divorce (Sadeghi, 2016). Paul Buchanan considers emotional divorce as the first stage in the process of divorce, representing a marriage in decline. Emotional divorce is another type of divorce and a very important phenomenon that is not officially recorded anywhere. This

type of divorce concerns families that, for reasons such as prevailing family traditions, incorrect beliefs, and negative societal attitudes towards divorced women, fear of loneliness, the loss of children, or inability to meet life's needs, decide to continue living together under one roof despite emotional detachment (Rani et al., 2017). In the stage of emotional divorce, the couple is officially still married; however, they feel emotionally isolated because they perceive little difference between living with their spouse and living alone (Sadeghi, 2016). Emotional divorce, due to the contradictions in words, actions, and feelings, is one of the most painful situations a person can experience. This happens while the most important feature of marriage, which is love and companionship, is absent from the relationship (Rani et al., 2017). Individuals who reach this point do not necessarily divorce, but if they are not strongly seeking to resolve conflicts and, in most cases, do not seek professional help, their marital life is considered over (Sadeghi, 2016). Religious beliefs among couples are one of the factors that reduce divorce rates among them (Khezri & Kohnsal, 2017). Religious beliefs are a structured system of beliefs and actions toward sacred matters. Religious beliefs play a significant role in individual control and in various life events, as well as in mental health, protecting individuals from depression (Foji & Naderi, 2016). Religion is a complex construct that may have multiple effects on life and satisfaction. Psychologists and sociologists have always paid attention to the motivational aspect of religion and have shown interest in it. Therefore, religious beliefs can be defined as "knowledge and belief in the one true God, the prophets, the afterlife, and divine laws, along with specific emotional attachments toward God, oneself, others, and the universe, aimed at drawing closer to God and adhering to religious duties." It can be said that having meaning and purpose in life, a sense of belonging to a higher source, hope for God's assistance in difficult life situations, and benefiting from social and spiritual support are all methods that religious individuals can utilize to endure less harm when facing stressful life events.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

The results of this study may vary in different cultural contexts and age groups. One of the other limitations of this study was that other influential variables affecting psychological disorders and emotional divorce, such as

cultural, social, and income factors, were not examined. In future research, the relationship between emotional divorce and other variables (e.g., resilience, self-esteem, etc.) should be explored. Researchers should conduct both quantitative and qualitative studies to examine factors influencing the reduction of emotional divorce among couples. This research could be expanded to a larger area, such as the province level. In future studies, researchers should focus on cultural and social factors and work on these variables, such as emotional divorce, emotional interactions, religious beliefs, and psychological disorders. The results of this study indicated that there is a negative relationship between religious beliefs and emotional divorce. Therefore, it is recommended that relevant authorities use fundamental, scientific, and logical approaches, while considering the psychological characteristics of individuals, to promote religious values and beliefs. By organizing conferences and training sessions at the city level, the proper communication model should be taught to couples, helping them improve their emotional interactions. Through the development of appropriate educational programs within the framework of pre-marriage education, empowering couples, and interventions before divorce, the fundamental psychological needs and marital expectations can be addressed, thereby improving family functioning and making a significant step toward reducing emotional divorce among couples.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

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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