


## Investigating the Effect of Narcissistic Tendencies on Marital Relationship Stability and the Mediating Role of Emotional Maturity in Couples

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The present study aimed to investigate the effect of narcissistic tendencies on marital relationship stability and examine the mediating role of emotional maturity in couples.

**Methods and Materials:** This study employed a descriptive-correlational design and was conducted among married couples residing in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, Iran. A total of 384 couples were selected using multistage cluster sampling. Inclusion criteria included at least two years of marital experience and no history of severe psychological disorders. Data were collected using three standardized instruments: the Marital Instability Index (MII), the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), and the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS). The psychometric properties of these tools were confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and structural equation modeling (SEM) via SPSS and AMOS software. Bootstrapping was also employed to test the mediating effect.

**Findings:** The results revealed that narcissistic tendencies were significantly and negatively associated with marital relationship stability ( $\beta = -0.32, p < .001$ ). Emotional maturity was found to have a significant positive effect on marital stability ( $\beta = 0.43, p < .001$ ) and a significant negative relationship with narcissistic tendencies ( $\beta = -0.38, p < .001$ ). Importantly, emotional maturity partially mediated the relationship between narcissistic tendencies and marital stability (indirect effect  $\beta = -0.16, p < .01$ ), and the total effect of narcissism on marital instability was substantial ( $\beta = -0.48, p < .001$ ). The proposed model demonstrated a good fit to the data with acceptable fit indices.

**Conclusion:** The findings suggest that narcissistic traits undermine marital stability directly and indirectly by reducing emotional maturity. Emotional maturity serves as a protective factor that enhances relational resilience. These results highlight the importance of addressing emotional development and personality traits in marital counseling and relationship education.

**Keywords:** Narcissistic tendencies; Marital relationship stability; Emotional maturity; Structural equation modeling

## 1. Introduction

Marital relationship stability has long been recognized as a cornerstone of individual well-being and societal cohesion. As dynamic and multifaceted unions, marriages are shaped by a wide range of psychological, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors. Among these, narcissistic tendencies and emotional maturity have recently received growing attention in understanding patterns of relationship satisfaction and durability. In contemporary psychological research, narcissism—traditionally viewed as a maladaptive personality trait—is increasingly being investigated for its nuanced role in intimate relationships. Narcissistic individuals often exhibit traits such as grandiosity, entitlement, self-focus, and a diminished capacity for empathy, which can significantly affect their relational functioning and emotional responsiveness (Lavner et al., 2016; McNulty & Widman, 2013). When these tendencies are expressed within marital dynamics, they may undermine intimacy, reduce conflict resolution abilities, and ultimately threaten relational stability (Ahmadi & Mohammadi, 2019; Norouzi & Karimi, 2020).

Narcissism can be conceptualized across a continuum, with overt forms characterized by assertiveness and charm, and covert or vulnerable forms marked by hypersensitivity and relational fragility (Finzi-Dottan et al., 2025). Regardless of the subtype, narcissistic individuals often prioritize self-enhancement over mutual growth, making it difficult to sustain long-term emotional investments in marriage. Empirical studies have consistently shown that narcissistic traits correlate negatively with marital satisfaction and positively with relational conflict and instability (Alizadeh & Azami, 2022; Mahdavian & Shahinvarnosfaderani, 2023). Research by Norouzi and Karimi (2020), for instance, demonstrated that narcissistic tendencies were significantly higher in couples applying for divorce compared to those in stable marriages (Norouzi & Karimi, 2020). Similarly, McNulty and Widman (2013) reported that sexual narcissism, in particular, negatively predicted both sexual and marital satisfaction, highlighting the self-serving orientation of narcissistic individuals in intimate domains (McNulty & Widman, 2013).

In contrast to the destabilizing influence of narcissism, emotional maturity appears to play a protective role in marital functioning. Emotional maturity is defined as the ability to manage emotional responses, empathize with others, and engage in thoughtful and constructive interpersonal behavior, especially under stress (Mosavi &

Iravani, 2012; Shamsi, 2021). It encompasses attributes such as emotional stability, independence, social adjustment, and the capacity for resilience in the face of relational difficulties (Ghasemi Verniab et al., 2020; Sinha, 2021). Emotionally mature individuals are more likely to engage in effective communication, resolve conflicts constructively, and foster emotional intimacy—all of which contribute to marital satisfaction and longevity (Bharath et al., 2020; Gholami et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have identified emotional maturity as a strong predictor of marital success. Mosavi and Iravani (2012) showed that higher levels of emotional maturity were significantly associated with greater marital satisfaction, regardless of the couple's socio-demographic background (Mosavi & Iravani, 2012). Likewise, Bahrami and Sadeghi (2022) demonstrated that emotional maturity mediates the relationship between personality factors and marital stability, suggesting that even individuals with potentially disruptive traits can maintain stable relationships when emotionally mature (Bahrami & Sadeghi, 2022). This aligns with the model proposed by Kakolian et al. (2024), which positioned emotional maturity as a central factor mediating between marital expectations, conflicts, and satisfaction among women (Kakolian et al., 2024). The centrality of this variable has also been confirmed in different cultural settings. For instance, Fu et al. (2023) emphasized the role of emotionally mature responses in navigating intergenerational family boundaries and enhancing marital satisfaction in Chinese families (Fu et al., 2023).

The interplay between narcissism and emotional maturity is especially noteworthy. While narcissistic traits tend to compromise emotional closeness and increase relational volatility, emotional maturity may counteract these effects by promoting self-awareness, empathy, and better regulation of affective impulses. This mediating function of emotional maturity has been highlighted in several recent studies. For example, Ghasemi Verniab et al. (2020) found that emotional maturity significantly mediated the effect of cognitive distortions on marital commitment, indicating its broad regulatory role within marital contexts (Ghasemi Verniab et al., 2020). Similarly, Mousavi and Heidari (2018) showed that emotional maturity moderated the impact of marital attraction on relationship longevity, reinforcing its buffering role (Mousavi & Heidari, 2018). These findings are particularly important when considering high-risk relational traits like narcissism, as they suggest possible intrapersonal pathways to relational repair and stability.

Marital relationship stability itself is a multi-dimensional construct that reflects the degree of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral commitment spouses have toward one another over time. It is influenced by internal couple dynamics such as emotional connection and external factors including socio-economic stressors and cultural expectations (Chi et al., 2020; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Stable relationships are characterized by sustained emotional bonding, mutual trust, and effective conflict management (Agu & Nwankwo, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2015). On the other hand, instability may manifest as emotional withdrawal, chronic conflict, or the contemplation of separation or divorce. Research has shown that emotional maturity enhances stability by facilitating adaptive coping strategies, while narcissism tends to erode it by fostering entitlement and emotional detachment (Ahmadi & Mohammadi, 2019; Lavner et al., 2016).

Several models have been proposed to explain the predictors of marital stability. Abreu-Afonso et al. (2022) presented an integrative model that included communication skills, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence as key drivers of long-term relational satisfaction (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022). Their findings echo those of Hosseini and Rezaei (2020), who emphasized the role of marital attractions and intrinsic motivations in maintaining marital bonds (Hosseini & Rezaei, 2020). Notably, studies also indicate that these dynamics vary across stages of marital life, cultural contexts, and individual psychological profiles (Mirzaei, 2022; Nameni et al., 2016).

Despite the wealth of literature on marital satisfaction and its determinants, few studies have systematically examined how narcissistic tendencies and emotional maturity jointly influence marital stability in the Iranian context. This gap is particularly important given that cultural norms in Iran strongly emphasize marital commitment, family cohesion, and emotional interdependence. Investigating the mediating role of emotional maturity in the relationship between narcissism and marital stability can thus provide deeper insights into the psychological processes that sustain or disrupt intimate partnerships.

Given this background, the present study aims to explore the effect of narcissistic tendencies on the stability of marital relationships while examining the mediating role of emotional maturity among couples in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study was conducted using a descriptive-correlational design with the primary objective of investigating how narcissistic tendencies affect the stability of marital relationships, and whether emotional maturity serves as a mediating factor in this dynamic among couples in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, Iran. The target population included all married couples residing in this province during the year 2024 (1403 in the Persian calendar). Using a multistage cluster sampling technique, a total of 384 couples were selected to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria required couples to have a minimum of two years of marital history and no history of severe psychological disorders. This approach ensured that the sample reflected couples with sufficient relational experience and psychological stability to provide meaningful insights into the study's constructs.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Marital Stability

The first instrument used in this research was the Marital Instability Index (MII), developed by Edwards, Johnson, and Booth in 1987. This 14-item questionnaire is designed to assess the extent of instability within marital relationships and to identify the potential susceptibility of couples to divorce. The MII focuses not only on overt dissatisfaction but also on underlying thoughts and behaviors that might precede marital breakdown. The instrument is widely recognized for its predictive power in identifying relational instability and has been used extensively in both clinical and research settings. Its psychometric properties are well-established, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93 indicating high internal consistency. Furthermore, the split-half reliability was reported at 0.70, confirming the instrument's robustness for measuring the intended construct. Given these characteristics, the MII served as a reliable tool for quantifying the stability of marital relationships in this study.

#### 2.2.2. Narcissistic Tendencies

The second instrument employed was the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), originally developed by Raskin and Hall in 1979. This 40-item instrument utilizes a forced-choice format in which respondents select between two statements, one of which reflects narcissistic tendencies. Each endorsed narcissistic response contributes to the total



score, with scores above 20 indicating high levels of narcissism. The NPI evaluates seven core dimensions: authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, vanity, and entitlement. These dimensions reflect the multifaceted nature of narcissism and allow for a nuanced understanding of how different expressions of narcissistic traits relate to interpersonal functioning. The reliability of this tool has been substantiated through multiple studies; Raskin reported a split-half reliability of 0.80 in his initial validations. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the individual subscales also exceeded 0.74, underscoring the scale's internal consistency. Specifically, the subscale reliabilities ranged from 0.742 (exploitativeness) to 0.795 (entitlement), making this instrument an appropriate choice for assessing narcissistic traits in a diverse adult population.

### 2.2.3. Emotional Maturity

The third instrument utilized in the study was the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) developed by Yashvir Singh and Bhargava. This standardized 48-item questionnaire evaluates five key components of emotional maturity: emotional instability, emotional regression, personality disintegration, social maladjustment, and lack of independence. Each component is assessed through a subset of items, allowing the instrument to capture a wide range of emotional regulation and expression behaviors. The EMS is commonly used in both research and applied psychology to examine the capacity for emotional processing and adaptation. The reliability of this scale, as calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Subscale reliabilities also demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with values such as 0.794 for lack of independence and 0.768 for emotional regression. Split-half reliability analysis yielded a coefficient of 0.76, reinforcing the tool's suitability for measuring the construct of emotional maturity in adult populations, particularly in relational contexts.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 384)*

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Marital Relationship Stability	35.62	6.47
Narcissistic Tendencies	22.89	5.73
Emotional Maturity	108.42	12.31

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for marital relationship stability was 35.62 (SD = 6.47), indicating a

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Following data collection, all responses were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed to characterize the sample and the primary variables. To test the hypothesized relationships among narcissistic tendencies, emotional maturity, and marital stability, structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS software. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to explore bivariate associations between the variables. The mediating role of emotional maturity was evaluated using the bootstrap method, which allows for more robust estimation of indirect effects by generating confidence intervals from repeated sampling. All statistical procedures were executed with adherence to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their data were treated with strict confidentiality throughout the research process.

## 3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the participating couples are summarized as follows. In terms of the number of children, 10% of the sample (n = 40) reported having no children, 75% (n = 300) had one to two children, and the remaining 15% (n = 60) had more than two children. Regarding household monthly income, 30% (n = 120) earned less than 10 million tomans, 63% (n = 250) reported an income between 10 to 20 million tomans, and 17% (n = 30) had a monthly income exceeding 20 million tomans. As for age distribution, half of the participants (50%, n = 200) were between 19 to 25 years old, while 25% (n = 100) were in the 26 to 30 age group, and the remaining 25% (n = 100) were above 30 years old. This distribution reflects a diverse demographic profile in terms of age, family size, and economic status among the surveyed couples.

moderate level of perceived stability among the sampled couples. The mean score for narcissistic tendencies was

22.89 (SD = 5.73), suggesting a slightly elevated presence of narcissistic traits above the clinical midpoint threshold. Emotional maturity yielded a mean score of 108.42 (SD =

12.31), reflecting a relatively high level of emotional development in the participants.

**Table 2**

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients and Significance Levels Between Variables*

Variables	1	2	3
1. Marital Relationship Stability	—		
2. Narcissistic Tendencies	-.41** (p < .001)	—	
3. Emotional Maturity	.52** (p < .001)	-.38** (p < .001)	—

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the primary study variables. Marital relationship stability showed a significant negative correlation with narcissistic tendencies ( $r = -.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a significant positive correlation with emotional maturity ( $r = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Additionally, narcissistic tendencies were significantly negatively correlated with emotional maturity ( $r = -.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that higher narcissism is associated with lower emotional maturity and lower relationship stability.

**Table 3**

*Fit Indices of the Structural Equation Model*

Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
$\chi^2$ (Chi-square)	97.46	—
df	48	—
$\chi^2/df$	2.03	< 3.00
GFI	.93	$\geq .90$
AGFI	.90	$\geq .90$
CFI	.95	$\geq .90$
TLI	.94	$\geq .90$
RMSEA	.052	$\leq .08$

The structural equation model demonstrated a good fit to the data, as evidenced by the indices presented in Table 3. The chi-square value was 97.46 with 48 degrees of freedom, resulting in a  $\chi^2/df$  ratio of 2.03, which is well within the

acceptable range. Other fit indices also indicated a good model fit: GFI = .93, AGFI = .90, CFI = .95, and TLI = .94. The RMSEA value was .052, further supporting the adequacy of the model.

**Table 4**

*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Variables in the Structural Model*

Path	B	S.E	Beta	p
Narcissistic Tendencies → Marital Stability (Direct)	-0.29	0.06	-0.32	< .001
Narcissistic Tendencies → Emotional Maturity	-0.41	0.05	-0.38	< .001
Emotional Maturity → Marital Stability	0.37	0.07	0.43	< .001
Narcissistic Tendencies → Marital Stability (Indirect via Emotional Maturity)	-0.15	0.04	-0.16	< .01
Narcissistic Tendencies → Marital Stability (Total)	-0.44	0.08	-0.48	< .001

Table 4 displays the path coefficients from the structural model. Narcissistic tendencies had a significant direct negative effect on marital relationship stability ( $B = -0.29$ ,  $\beta = -0.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a significant negative effect on emotional maturity ( $B = -0.41$ ,  $\beta = -0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Emotional maturity, in turn, significantly predicted marital

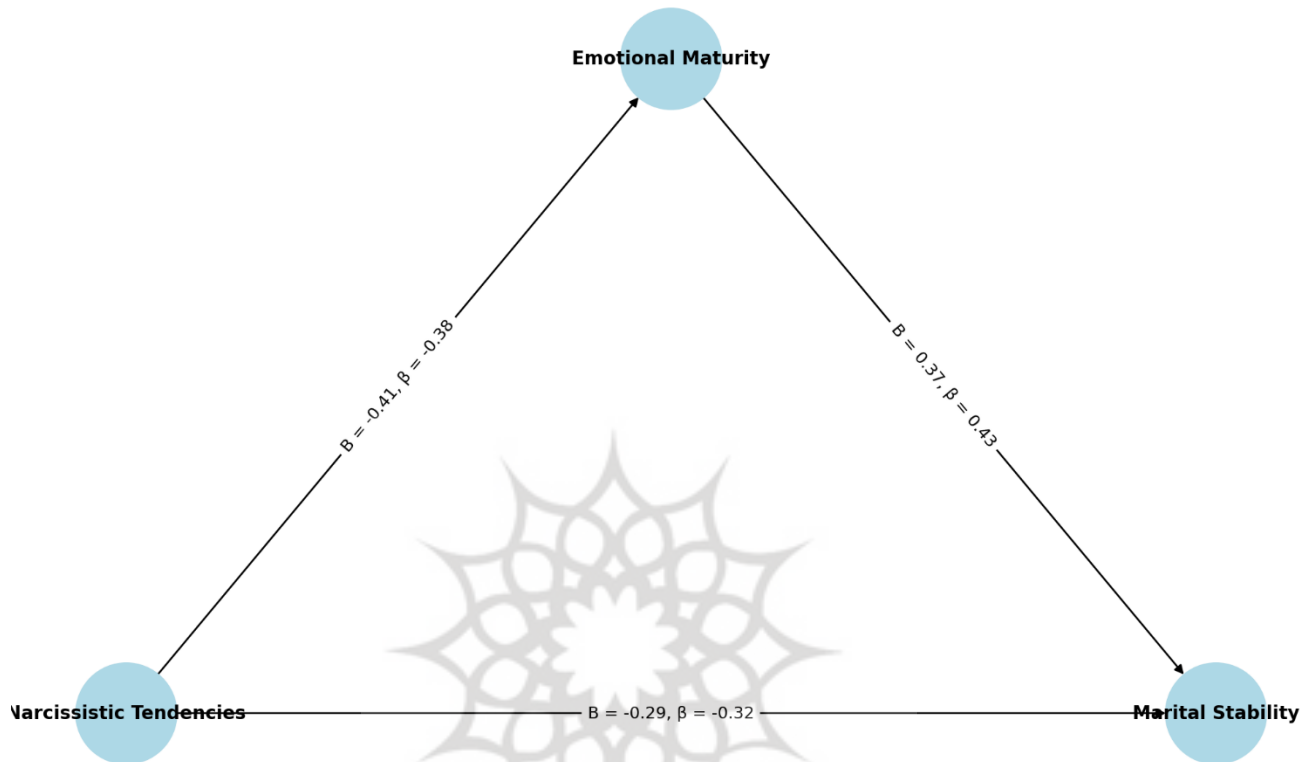
stability in a positive direction ( $B = 0.37$ ,  $\beta = 0.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of narcissistic tendencies on marital stability through emotional maturity was also significant ( $B = -0.15$ ,  $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the total effect was stronger ( $B = -0.44$ ,  $\beta = -0.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that emotional

maturity partially mediates the relationship between narcissism and marital relationship stability.

**Figure 1**

*Model with Beta Coefficients*

Structural Model of Narcissistic Tendencies, Emotional Maturity, and Marital Stability



#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the effect of narcissistic tendencies on marital relationship stability and to explore the mediating role of emotional maturity in this relationship among married couples in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. The findings revealed several key insights that align with, and extend, the existing literature on marital psychology and personality dynamics. The results confirmed that narcissistic tendencies negatively and significantly predicted marital stability, both directly and indirectly. Moreover, emotional maturity not only predicted marital stability positively but also significantly mediated the negative effects of narcissistic traits on this outcome.

The significant negative association between narcissistic tendencies and marital stability is consistent with earlier findings, reinforcing the notion that narcissistic traits undermine the foundation of a stable marital relationship.

This result aligns with the studies of Lavner et al. (2016), who demonstrated that narcissism in newlyweds predicted a decline in marital satisfaction over time due to its self-centered and emotionally avoidant nature (Lavner et al., 2016). Narcissistic individuals often exhibit inflated self-importance, lack of empathy, and difficulties in maintaining balanced interpersonal dynamics, all of which erode intimacy and increase the likelihood of conflict. The present findings are also consistent with the work of Norouzi and Karimi (2020), who found that narcissistic tendencies were more prevalent among couples applying for divorce than those in stable marriages (Norouzi & Karimi, 2020). Furthermore, Ahmadi and Mohammadi (2019) provided a structural model that directly linked narcissistic traits to relational breakdowns, which echoes the pattern observed in the current study (Ahmadi & Mohammadi, 2019).

In line with these results, the study also found a significant negative relationship between narcissistic tendencies and emotional maturity. This inverse relationship

has been previously documented in both theoretical and empirical research. Narcissistic individuals, particularly those with vulnerable traits, tend to struggle with emotional regulation and introspection, which are core elements of emotional maturity (Finzi-Dottan et al., 2025). Alizadeh and Azami (2022) highlighted that narcissism negatively impacts psychological flexibility and emotional responsiveness, thereby limiting one's capacity for adaptive emotional functioning within intimate relationships (Alizadeh & Azami, 2022). Similarly, Mahdavian and Shahinvarnosfaderani (2023) demonstrated that narcissistic traits, especially entitlement and exploitativeness, are inversely related to emotional maturity and significantly compromise the quality of marital adjustment (Mahdavian & Shahinvarnosfaderani, 2023).

The significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and marital stability underscores the importance of emotional regulation and resilience in maintaining satisfying long-term partnerships. This finding supports previous work by Mosavi and Iravani (2012), who found that higher emotional maturity scores were associated with greater marital satisfaction, particularly in conflict resolution and communication domains (Mosavi & Iravani, 2012). Bahrami and Sadeghi (2022) also found that emotional maturity acts as a stabilizing force in marriage by mitigating the effects of adverse personality traits and promoting conflict management skills (Bahrami & Sadeghi, 2022). The current study's results validate the theoretical assertions by Bharath et al. (2020), who emphasized that emotionally mature individuals demonstrate more constructive approaches to relational challenges and exhibit fewer maladaptive responses such as withdrawal, blame-shifting, or aggression (Bharath et al., 2020).

Moreover, the finding that emotional maturity mediates the relationship between narcissistic tendencies and marital stability suggests that intrapersonal capacities may buffer the deleterious effects of narcissistic traits. This aligns with the findings of Ghasemi Verniab et al. (2020), who proposed a structural model in which emotional maturity played a mediating role between interpersonal distortions and marital commitment (Ghasemi Verniab et al., 2020). Similarly, Mousavi and Heidari (2018) found that emotional maturity moderated the influence of marital attraction on relationship longevity, suggesting that emotionally mature individuals are better equipped to sustain their relationships even in the presence of challenging psychological profiles (Mousavi & Heidari, 2018). This capacity may be particularly crucial in

marital settings where long-term commitment necessitates both emotional regulation and empathy.

The structural model's fit indices in this study further validate the robustness of the proposed relationships. The model fit well with the data, as evidenced by acceptable chi-square to degrees of freedom ratios and strong values for CFI, GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA. This suggests that the model adequately captured the complex interplay between narcissism, emotional maturity, and marital stability, lending empirical weight to the theoretical framework. It also complements the modeling approaches of Kakolian et al. (2024), who emphasized the role of emotional maturity in mediating the effects of love, expectations, and conflict on marital satisfaction (Kakolian et al., 2024).

These findings also resonate with broader trends in marital research. For example, Karney and Bradbury (2020) argue that marital stability is not merely a function of dyadic interactions but is deeply embedded in individual psychological traits and regulatory processes (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Similarly, Chi et al. (2020) note that relationship-oriented values, which overlap conceptually with emotional maturity, significantly predict both life and marital satisfaction across diverse cultural contexts (Chi et al., 2020). Fu et al. (2023) highlighted how family boundary management, often influenced by emotional intelligence and maturity, significantly contributes to marital outcomes (Fu et al., 2023). In these perspectives, emotional maturity is a central axis upon which marital resilience is constructed.

Furthermore, the relevance of emotional maturity and narcissism to marital stability is not restricted to Western paradigms. In the Iranian context, family and marital commitment are deeply ingrained in cultural and religious norms. Studies by Mirzaei et al. (2022) and Hosseini and Rezaei (2020) emphasize that emotional bonds, moral commitments, and interpersonal values significantly shape marital longevity in Iranian society (Hosseini & Rezaei, 2020; Mirzaei, 2022). The present study adds to this body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence from a culturally distinct sample, affirming that even in traditional societies, personality dynamics and emotional competencies play a critical role in relational stability.

Nevertheless, while the results confirm and extend existing models of marital functioning, they also point toward important areas of psychological intervention. If emotional maturity can buffer the negative effects of narcissism on marital stability, then relationship education and couple therapy programs should incorporate emotional regulation training, empathy enhancement, and self-



awareness exercises. Therapeutic frameworks such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) or Schema Therapy may be particularly effective in this regard. Additionally, the strong mediating role of emotional maturity opens new avenues for marital interventions that target individual development rather than focusing solely on dyadic interaction.

## 5. Suggestions and Limitations

Despite the contributions of this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causal relationships among the variables. Longitudinal research would be more appropriate for exploring how narcissistic tendencies and emotional maturity evolve and interact over time in predicting marital stability. Second, the data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly concerning sensitive traits like narcissism. Third, the sample was drawn from a single geographical region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or socio-economic contexts. Lastly, the study did not control for potential moderating variables such as duration of marriage, number of children, or education level, which may have influenced the observed relationships.

Future research could build on these findings by using longitudinal designs to track the stability of relationships and the developmental trajectory of narcissistic traits and emotional maturity. Additionally, future studies could include dyadic data to assess partner perceptions and interactions more accurately. It would also be beneficial to incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews or case studies, to gain deeper insight into how emotional maturity is experienced and expressed within marital interactions. Exploring the role of other psychological constructs such as attachment styles, communication patterns, or emotional intelligence could further enhance the explanatory power of existing models. Moreover, comparative studies across cultures or religious backgrounds would shed light on how contextual factors shape the influence of narcissism and emotional maturity in marriage.

The results of this study underscore the need for integrative intervention programs in marriage counseling that focus not only on communication and conflict resolution but also on enhancing emotional maturity at the individual level. Practitioners should assess personality traits such as narcissism during premarital or early marital counseling to identify potential risks to relationship stability. Developing

therapeutic modules that specifically address emotional regulation, empathy building, and adaptive coping strategies may serve as protective mechanisms for couples facing personality-related challenges. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives that promote psychological well-being and self-awareness in relationships could contribute to the prevention of marital instability in the broader population.

## 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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