



# Modeling the structural relationship between personality dimensions and attachment styles with communication skills and marital conflicts with the mediation of primary maladaptive schemas in couples facing divorce

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this research was to develop a model exploring the structural relationship between personality dimensions and attachment styles, communication skills, and marital conflicts, mediated by early maladaptive schemas in couples facing divorce. **Method:** This was a descriptive-correlational study. The population included all couples facing divorce who visited counseling centers in Takestan city during the second half of 2020 and 2021. A convenience sampling method was used, and the sample size was determined as 373 individuals based on Sample Power software. The research instruments included the Big Five Personality Traits Questionnaire, Communication Skills (Queendom, 2004), Marital Conflicts (Jones, 1997), Young's Early Maladaptive Schemas (2007), and Hazan and Shaver's Attachment Styles (1987). Data analysis was performed using SPSS and Amos software. **Results:** The results showed that personality dimensions do not significantly relate to marital conflicts among couples facing divorce ( $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, attachment styles do not significantly relate to marital conflicts ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, early maladaptive schemas played a mediating role in the relationship between personality dimensions and marital conflicts, with a significant t-value (17.97) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, early maladaptive schemas had a mediating role in the relationship between personality dimensions and communication skills, indicated by a significant t-value (17.93) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, early maladaptive schemas mediated the relationship between attachment styles and marital conflicts, with a t-value (12.87) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). **Conclusion:** Considering that early maladaptive schemas can play a mediating role in the relationships of couples facing divorce, they are a significant factor in shaping personality, attachment styles, and marital conflicts. **Keywords:** personality dimensions, attachment styles, communication skills, marital conflict and maladaptive schema.

## Introduction

The family is one of the main pillars of social life; thus, marriage and maintaining the foundation of the family have been of special importance (Sho'akazemi, 2013). The ideal of a life full of happiness and bliss in the past 50 years has been challenged by nearly half of all marriages ending in divorce (Brown & Wright, 2017). Divorce is a physical and emotional separation process that starts with continuous and serious thoughts and discussions between spouses about dissolving the marital bond and then continues throughout resolving emotional, legal, economic, religious, extended family, and work/social aspects of their relationship (Zahra Kar & Jafari, 2010). Divorce is an increasing phenomenon and causes pain and psychological harm, but it must be noted that not all divorces have negative effects; some divorces lead to an individual's liberation from a distressing situation and relationship, resulting in their peace of mind (Rally & Esuondi, 2020). More than half of those who have divorced have sought to remarry, and more than half of those who have remarried have again sought divorce (Cohen, 2019).

Therefore, with the increasing marital conflicts in the contemporary world and the risk of separation and divorce and its negative impact on the health of the spouses and their children, the importance and necessity of research increase. Considering what has been stated and researches reported separately, the current study aimed to present an appropriate structural model through the relationship of personality dimensions and attachment styles with communication skills and marital conflicts with the mediation of early maladaptive schemas among couples facing divorce, and the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Personality dimensions have a direct effect on marital conflicts among couples facing divorce.
2. Attachment styles have a direct effect on marital conflict among couples facing divorce.
3. Early maladaptive schema plays a mediating role in the relationship between personality dimensions and marital conflict.
4. Early maladaptive schema plays a mediating role in the relationship between personality dimensions and communication skills.
5. Early maladaptive schema plays a mediating role in the relationship between attachment styles and marital conflicts.

## Method

This was a descriptive-correlational study. The population included all couples facing divorce who visited counseling centers in Takestan city during the second half of 2020 and 2021. A convenience sampling method was used, and the sample size was determined as 373 individuals based on Sample Power software. The research instruments included the Big Five Personality Traits Questionnaire, Communication Skills (Queendom, 2004), Marital Conflicts (Jones, 1997), Young's Early Maladaptive Schemas (2007), and Hazan and Shaver's Attachment Styles (1987). Data analysis was performed using SPSS and Amos software.

## Results

The results showed that personality dimensions do not significantly relate to marital conflicts among couples facing divorce ( $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, attachment styles do not

significantly relate to marital conflicts ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, early maladaptive schemas played a mediating role in the relationship between personality dimensions and marital conflicts, with a significant t-value (17.97) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, early maladaptive schemas had a mediating role in the relationship between personality dimensions and communication skills, indicated by a significant t-value (17.93) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, early maladaptive schemas mediated the relationship between attachment styles and marital conflicts, with a t-value (12.87) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to develop a structural model of personality dimensions and attachment styles with communication skills and marital conflict, mediated by early maladaptive schemas, among couples facing divorce. The results indicate that the model's fit indices are confirmed. Regarding the mentioned hypotheses, it shows that personality dimensions and attachment styles do not have a direct effect on communication skills and marital conflicts but rather an indirect effect. The mediating role of early maladaptive schema in relation to these variables, which has been confirmed, is of significant importance.

Overall, it can be asserted that early maladaptive schema is the most crucial mediating variable in relation to personality traits, communication skills, and marital conflicts, and it may play a more effective role in predicting divorce. Future research should employ qualitative studies to further understand these relationships, thereby aiding in improving couples' relationships and preventing conflicts leading to divorce. Complementary studies with experimental and causal-comparative methods should also be conducted, including examining influential factors in divorce and controlling variables such as social, cultural, and economic factors and feminist attitudes promoted through social networks in the context of egalitarianism, freedom, and equality.

One of the limitations of the current study is the self-report nature of the questionnaire. It is suggested that future research uses implicit task versions to examine schemas and other variables. Based on the findings of this study, planners, counselors, and family psychologists are advised to help couples in counseling sessions to identify their attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas and improve their communication skills.

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