



Research Paper

Prediction of Marital Emotional Burnout in Couples Based on Communication Styles and Early Maladaptive Schemas



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Abstract

The aim of this study was to predict marital emotional burnout among couples based on communication styles and early maladaptive schemas. In terms of purpose, the research was applied; in terms of nature, it employed a quantitative approach; and regarding the method of implementation, it was a descriptive correlational study. The statistical population consisted of all couples in Ardabil City in 2025. Since there was no accurate statistical information regarding the total number of couples in Ardabil City in 2025, based on the maximum sample size estimated by Cochran's formula, 384 participants were selected as the study sample using a non-random convenience sampling method. Data were collected using the standard Couple Burnout Measure (CBM) developed by Pines (1996), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ), and Young Schema Questionnaire–Short Form (YSQ-SF). The findings indicated that communication styles and early maladaptive schemas could significantly predict marital emotional burnout among couples in Ardabil City. Among communication styles, the predictive contribution of the demand-withdraw communication pattern ($\beta = 0.146$) and mutual withdrawal ($\beta = -0.111$) was statistically significant. Among early maladaptive schemas, the predictive contributions of emotional deprivation ($\beta = 0.118$), social isolation/alienation ($\beta = 0.161$), dependence/incompetence ($\beta = 0.102$), and subjugation ($\beta = 0.112$) were statistically significant. The results of this study indicate that marital emotional burnout is rooted in dysfunctional communication patterns and deep cognitive structures (schemas). Therefore, to prevent and reduce marital burnout, focusing on modifying destructive interactional styles and treating early maladaptive schemas through psychological interventions and family counseling is essential.

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Introduction

Marital relationships, as one of the most fundamental dimensions of human life, play a crucial role in psychological well-being, quality of life, and social cohesion. The quality of interactions between couples is not only associated with their individual and emotional satisfaction, but recent empirical evidence also indicates that it has a determining role in overall family functioning, children's mental health, and the development of their emotional and social adjustment (Conica et al., 2023; Du et al., 2022). Accordingly, couples' interaction patterns can directly influence children's emotional-social development and the functioning of the family system (Gao et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that poor marital relationship quality is associated with increased anxiety, depression, emotional distress, and reduced life satisfaction (Körük & Özabacı, 2023). In recent decades, cultural changes, economic pressures, and increased psychological stress have made it increasingly difficult for many couples to maintain intimacy, empathy, and emotional balance in their relationships. This issue has drawn researchers' attention to the phenomenon of marital burnout (Kocyiğit & Uzun, 2025).

Marital burnout refers to a state of psychological exhaustion, emotional depletion, and a gradual decline in emotional attachment between spouses that develops as a result of chronic stress and unresolved conflicts within marital life (Koçyiğit & Uzun, 2024). This phenomenon is typically characterized by emotional detachment,

hopelessness toward the relationship, reduced empathy, and diminished quality of interactions between couples (Kieslich & Steins, 2022; Shrout et al., 2023). Marital burnout is a gradual and debilitating process within couple relationships that, due to persistent psychological pressures and interpersonal conflicts, leads to the depletion of emotional resources and deterioration of relationship quality. Research evidence indicates that this phenomenon is associated with significant individual and interpersonal consequences, including increased difficulties in emotion regulation, reduced marital satisfaction, and diminished quality of couple interactions, which may ultimately result in emotional withdrawal and relationship instability (Haghparast et al., 2023). Studies have shown that marital burnout is associated with increased relational conflicts, decreased intimacy, and poorer psychological health, including depression and chronic stress, and may create a cycle of emotional erosion within marital relationships (Kocyiğit & Uzun, 2025). In this regard, findings suggest that the persistence of burnout in marital relationships not only weakens relationship satisfaction and cohesion but may also, in some cases, increase the risk of separation and relationship dissolution (Ede & Okeke, 2024). Furthermore, recent research findings indicate that difficulties in emotion regulation and the continuation of dysfunctional interaction patterns among couples are among the key factors contributing to the development and persistence of marital emotional burnout. These factors facilitate the gradual depletion of emotional resources

within relationships by intensifying interpersonal conflicts and undermining communication processes (*Shrout et al., 2023; Zamani et al., 2023*). Therefore, identifying predictors of marital emotional burnout can play an important role in designing preventive and therapeutic interventions.

One of the most important variables associated with marital relationship quality is couples' communication styles. Effective communication is considered the foundation of marital intimacy and adjustment (*Jubran et al., 2025*). Couples' communication patterns, which encompass the verbal and nonverbal expression of emotions, needs, and thoughts, play a determining role in the quality of marital interactions (*Omoboyle et al., 2024; Putri & Kusumaningrum, 2024*). Constructive emotional expression can strengthen emotional bonds, mutual understanding, and relationship resilience. In contrast, dysfunctional communication patterns, such as criticism, defensiveness, and emotional neglect, contribute to the erosion of trust and the reduction of intimacy (*Carasso & Segel-Karpas, 2024*). Conversely, assertive and empathetic communication styles provide a context for conflict resolution and increased marital satisfaction (*Torabi et al., 2025*). Recent studies have shown that maladaptive communication patterns are associated with increased marital conflict and reduced emotional relationship quality and can gradually deplete couples' emotional resources (*Meara et al., 2026*).

In addition to communication-related factors, deeper cognitive and emotional

variables also play a significant role in the quality of marital relationships (*Kover et al., 2024*). Young's theory of early maladaptive schemas is considered one of the most important theoretical frameworks for explaining the cognitive roots of interpersonal problems (*Pilkington & Karantzas, 2024*). Early maladaptive schemas are dysfunctional mental representations of the self and relationships with others that originate from the unmet basic emotional needs during childhood and influence individuals' perceptions, emotions, and behaviors throughout life (*Sójta & Strzelecki, 2023*). Individuals with activated maladaptive schemas tend to interpret interpersonal situations as threatening and exhibit more intense emotional reactions and more dysfunctional coping behaviors (*Janovsky et al., 2023; Siri et al., 2025*). Schemas such as abandonment, emotional deprivation, mistrust/abuse, and shame can contribute to fear of rejection, unhealthy dependency, emotional sensitivity, and emotional avoidance in intimate relationships (*Fernando et al., 2024; Ginalska & Cichopek, 2025; Kover et al., 2024*).

Numerous studies have confirmed the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and marital problems as well as poor interpersonal relationship quality. For instance, the findings of Grabowski's study indicated that the severity of early maladaptive schemas is negatively associated with the quality of marital bonding and couples' communication (*Grabowski, 2023*). Moreover, recent research findings suggest that maladaptive schemas can undermine

marital relationship quality through their effects on emotion regulation, attachment styles, and communication patterns (*Ginalska & Cichopek, 2025; Torabi et al., 2025*). On the other hand, contemporary models of marital conflict have demonstrated that dysfunctional communication patterns and emotional reactivity play important mediating roles in the relationship between maladaptive cognitive structures and marital difficulties (*Meara et al., 2026; Siri et al., 2025*).

From a theoretical perspective, it can be argued that early maladaptive schemas influence the way individuals interpret their spouse's behaviors, regulate their emotions, and establish communication patterns, thereby contributing to the development of chronic conflicts and the gradual depletion of emotional resources. Individuals with activated maladaptive schemas often exhibit excessive, avoidant, or aggressive reactions when facing marital conflicts and experience difficulties in expressing their emotional needs in a healthy manner. These dysfunctional communication patterns can create a cycle of misunderstanding, emotional distance, and emotional burnout within the relationship. Therefore, it appears that communication styles and early maladaptive schemas may not only independently contribute to the prediction of marital emotional burnout but may also interact with each other in this process.

Previous research has demonstrated that studies published worldwide have extensively emphasized the role of cognitive and communicative factors in the quality of marital relationships. Evidence indicates that

early maladaptive schemas are significantly associated with reduced satisfaction in romantic relationships, increased interpersonal conflicts, and disruptions in couples' communication patterns. For example, *Grabowski (2023)* and *Kover et al. (2024)* reported that the activation of early maladaptive schemas is associated with reduced quality of marital bonding, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction. Moreover, *Janovsky et al. (2023)* showed that these schemas increase emotional sensitivity and communication difficulties in interpersonal situations characterized by rejection. In addition, *Torabi et al. (2025)* emphasized that early maladaptive schemas, in interaction with communication beliefs and attachment styles, play an important role in explaining the quality of marital relationships. Similarly, *Siri et al. (2025)* demonstrated that coping styles mediate the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and marital conflicts, highlighting the role of regulatory and emotional processes in the persistence of marital problems. Furthermore, the results of network modeling conducted by *Meara et al. (2026)* indicated that attachment styles, communication patterns, emotional reactivity, and cognitive distortions interact as a network in the development of marital conflicts. In addition, a systematic review by *Sójta and Strzelecki (2023)* revealed that early maladaptive schemas can contribute to the intergenerational transmission of maladaptive emotional and interpersonal patterns. Overall, international research evidence suggests that early maladaptive schemas and communication styles are among the most important cognitive-emotional factors

influencing marital relationship quality and couples' emotional burnout.

Findings from domestic studies also indicate that early maladaptive schemas play a significant role in marital relationship quality. The results of a meta-analysis of 47 Iranian studies revealed that these schemas contribute to both the increase of negative indicators, such as emotional divorce and pessimism, and the reduction of positive indicators, including marital intimacy, with their effects reported at a moderate level (*Ostovar, 2024*). Furthermore, research evidence by *Lesani Behzadkalai et al. (2025)* indicates that early maladaptive schemas contribute to the explanation of marital disaffection through mechanisms such as emotion regulation, and difficulties in emotion regulation can intensify this effect. Additionally, these schemas, along with irrational beliefs, have been identified as predictors of reduced sexual satisfaction and weakened marital stability (*Sadeghi et al., 2023*). Overall, domestic research highlights the central role of early maladaptive schemas in various dimensions of marital relationships; however, their simultaneous examination with communication styles in predicting marital emotional burnout has received limited attention.

Despite the growing body of research on marital relationships, a large proportion of studies have examined communication styles, early maladaptive schemas, and marital quality as separate variables. Although some studies have investigated the role of schemas in marital satisfaction and others have explored the effects of communication styles

on couples' conflicts, research examining the simultaneous contribution of these two variables to the prediction of marital emotional burnout remains limited, particularly within the cultural context of Iranian society, where cultural and family characteristics may influence couples' cognitive and communication patterns. Moreover, identifying cognitive and communicative factors affecting marital emotional burnout may have important practical implications for family counselors and couple therapy specialists. Understanding maladaptive schemas and dysfunctional communication styles can contribute to the development of therapeutic interventions based on schema therapy, communication skills training, and marital conflict prevention programs. Accordingly, the present study was conducted with the aim of predicting marital emotional burnout based on communication styles and early maladaptive schemas.

Research Method

Given that the findings of this study can be directly applied by researchers and practitioners, the study was considered applied in terms of its purpose. Moreover, since all data collected in this research were objective and quantitative, the study employed a quantitative approach in terms of its nature. Regarding the research method, it was a descriptive correlational study. The statistical population consisted of all couples living in Ardabil City in 2025. Since there was no accurate statistical information available regarding the total number of couples in Ardabil City in 2025, based on the maximum sample size estimated using

Cochran's formula, 384 participants were selected as the study sample through a non-random convenience sampling method. The data collection instruments included the standard Couple Burnout Measure (CBM) developed by [Pines \(1996\)](#), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ), and the Young Schema Questionnaire–Short Form (YSQ-SF).

The Couple Burnout Measure (CBM) is a self-report instrument designed to assess the degree of marital burnout among couples. The CBM was adapted from another self-report measure originally developed to assess burnout and was developed by [Pines \(1996\)](#). This questionnaire consists of 21 items comprising three main components: physical exhaustion (e.g., feelings of fatigue), emotional exhaustion (e.g., feelings of worthlessness, frustration, and anger toward one's spouse), and mental exhaustion. All items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale, in which score 1 indicates that the respondent has never experienced the described feeling, while score 7 indicates a high level of experience of that feeling. Reliability assessments have demonstrated that this questionnaire has acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.84 to 0.90. Its validity has been confirmed through negative correlations with positive relationship characteristics, including positive perceptions of the relationship, quality of communication, sense of security, self-actualization, sense of purpose, emotional attraction toward one's spouse, and sexual relationship quality. Translated versions of the CBM have been

successfully used in cross-cultural studies conducted in Norway, Hungary, Mexico, Spain, Portugal, Finland, and Israel. Overall, the CBM demonstrates high internal consistency and satisfactory reliability and is an appropriate instrument for measuring marital burnout. The test–retest reliability coefficient was reported as 0.89 over a one-month interval, 0.76 over a two-month interval, and 0.66 over a four-month interval. Internal consistency among most participants was assessed using stable alpha coefficients, which ranged from 0.91 to 0.93.

The Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) is a 35-item instrument designed to assess couples' communication patterns ([Christensen & Sullaway, 1984](#)). Couples respond to the items based on their perceptions of their own communication styles across three specific hypothetical marital conflict situations. This questionnaire consists of five dimensions: (1) constructive communication, (2) mutual constructive communication/demand–withdraw patterns, (3) wife-demand/husband-withdraw communication pattern, (4) husband-demand/wife-withdraw communication pattern, and (5) mutual withdrawal. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was reported as 0.76 in the study by [Samadzadeh et al. \(2013\)](#). In the present study, the reliability coefficient of this instrument was also above 0.80, indicating a good and desirable level of reliability.

The Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ) was developed based on observations and clinical experiences reported by clinical specialists. This questionnaire was developed

by *Young (1998)* to measure 15 early maladaptive schemas. The scale consists of 75 items rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from “completely untrue of me” to “completely true of me.” A higher score on a specific subscale indicates a greater likelihood of the presence of a maladaptive schema in that individual. *Waller et al. (2001)* reported an internal consistency coefficient of 0.96 for the overall scale. Furthermore, the internal consistency coefficients of all subscales were above 0.80. The test–retest reliability coefficients of the subscales ranged from 0.50 to 0.82. *Sadooghi et al. (2008)* reported internal consistency coefficients ranging from 0.62 to 0.90 for the subscales and a total scale reliability coefficient of 0.94.

All participants were assured that the study was conducted solely for research purposes,

that providing their names and surnames was not required, and that their information would remain completely confidential. Accordingly, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they responded to the research questions voluntarily. After collecting the data through the questionnaires, the data were entered into SPSS software, and data analysis was conducted in two sections: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Research Findings

- Descriptive Findings

In this section, the central tendency index of the mean and the dispersion index of the standard deviation were used to report the descriptive characteristics of the study variables, including marital emotional burnout, communication styles, and early maladaptive schemas.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Marital Emotional Burnout, Communication Styles, and Early Maladaptive Schemas

Standard Deviation	Mean	Variable/Component and Dimensions
1.701	3.903	Marital Emotional Burnout
2.486	5.041	Constructive Communication
2.368	4.829	Demand–Withdraw Communication
2.370	5.081	Wife-Demand/Husband-Withdraw Pattern
2.275	4.972	Husband-Demand/Wife-Withdraw Pattern
2.361	4.853	Mutual Withdrawal
1.428	3.530	Emotional Deprivation
1.456	3.602	Abandonment/Instability
1.429	3.557	Mistrust/Abuse
1.406	3.630	Social Isolation/Alienation
1.448	3.550	Defectiveness/Shame
1.459	3.738	Failure

1.482	3.524	Dependence/Incompetence
1.375	3.476	Vulnerability to Harm
1.498	3.567	Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self
1.451	3.742	Subjugation
1.419	3.719	Self-Sacrifice
1.476	3.620	Emotional Inhibition
1.491	3.610	Unrelenting Standards
1.409	3.585	Entitlement/Grandiosity
1.409	3.760	Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline

The findings indicate that the mean scores of marital emotional burnout, constructive communication, demand–withdraw communication, wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern, husband-demand/wife-withdraw pattern, mutual withdrawal, emotional deprivation, abandonment/instability, mistrust/abuse, social isolation/alienation, defectiveness/shame, failure, dependence/incompetence, vulnerability to harm, enmeshment/undeveloped self, subjugation, self-sacrifice, emotional inhibition, unrelenting standards, entitlement/grandiosity, and insufficient self-control/self-discipline were 3.903, 5.041,

4.829, 5.081, 4.972, 4.853, 3.530, 3.602, 3.557, 3.630, 3.550, 3.738, 3.524, 3.476, 3.567, 3.742, 3.719, 3.620, 3.610, 3.585, and 3.760, respectively. Their standard deviations were 1.701, 2.486, 2.368, 2.370, 2.275, 2.361, 1.428, 1.456, 1.429, 1.406, 1.448, 1.459, 1.482, 1.375, 1.498, 1.451, 1.419, 1.476, 1.491, 1.409, and 1.409, respectively.

- Inferential Findings

Before applying the linear regression model, the primary assumption regarding the independence of regression residuals was examined using the Durbin–Watson test. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Durbin–Watson Test for Examining the Assumption of Independence of Regression Residuals

Model	Multiple Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error of Estimate	Durbin–Watson Statistic
1	0.651	0.424	0.392	1.333	1.934

The Durbin–Watson statistic ranges from 0 to 4. The optimal range for this test is between 1.5 and 2.5, within which the

assumption of independence among regression residuals can be confirmed. The Durbin–Watson statistic obtained in the present model was 1.934. Therefore, it can be concluded that the assumption was satisfied

and the use of the regression model was appropriate. Furthermore, based on the information presented in the table above and the coefficient of determination, it can be stated that communication styles and early maladaptive schemas can predict approximately 42% of marital emotional burnout among couples in Ardabil City.

To examine the linearity assumption of the data related to communication styles and early maladaptive schemas in predicting the criterion variable (marital emotional burnout), a scatter plot of the data was used. The results are presented in the following figure.

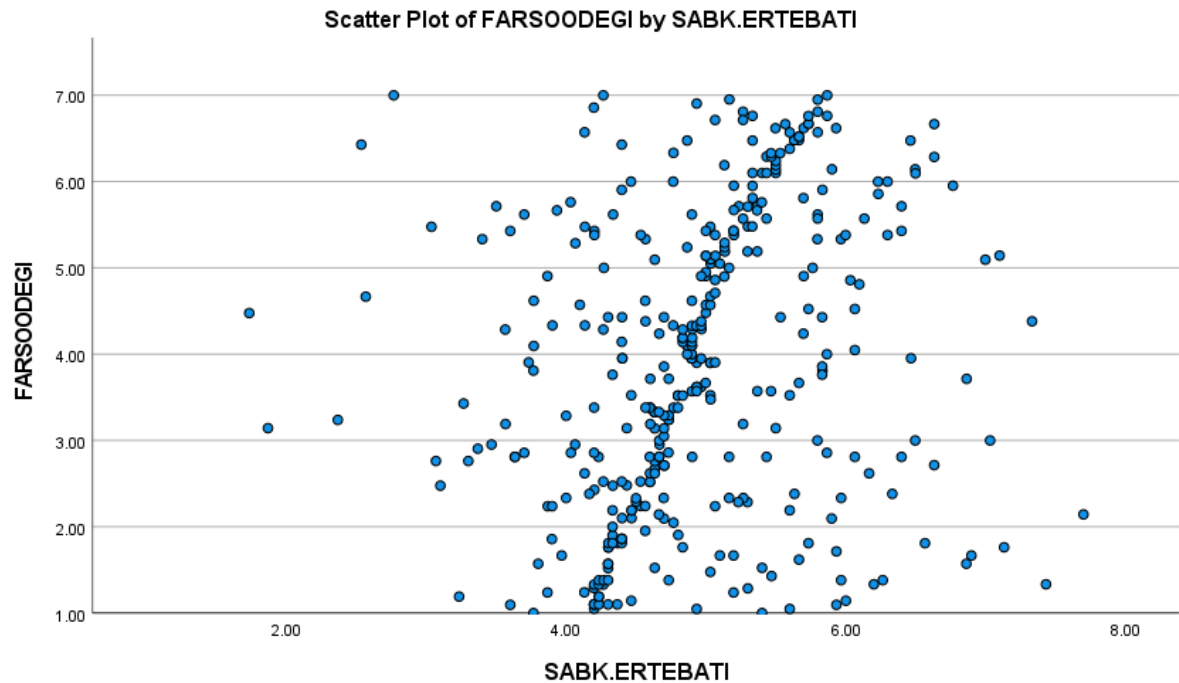


Figure 1. Scatter Plot of Communication Styles Data in Predicting the Criterion Variable of Marital Emotional Burnout

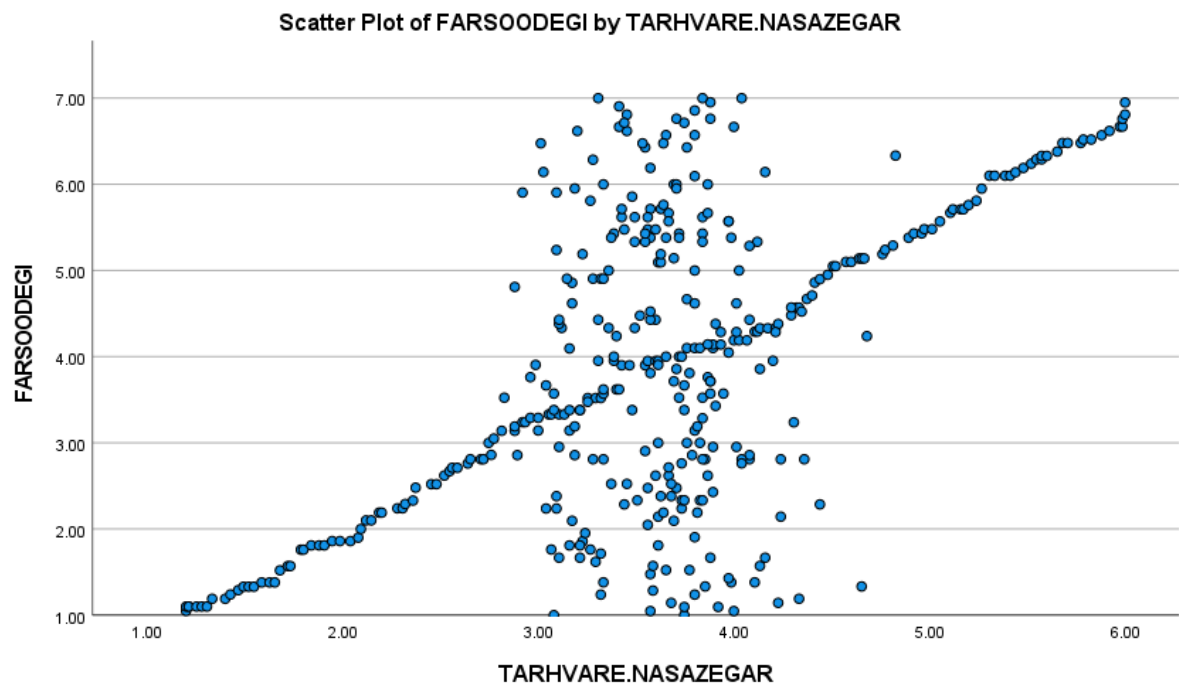


Figure 2. Scatter Plot of Early Maladaptive Schemas for Predicting Marital Emotional Burnout

Based on the information presented in the two figures above, the scatter plots of the descriptive data related to communication styles and early maladaptive schemas in relation to the criterion variable of marital emotional burnout among couples in Ardabil

City confirm the existence of a linear relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable. Therefore, the assumption of linearity is confirmed. Subsequently, the general regression model of the present study is presented as follows:

Table 3. Results of the Regression Model for Predicting Marital Emotional Burnout Among Couples Based on Communication Styles and Early Maladaptive Schemas

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F Statistic	Significance Level
Regression	474.964	20	23.748	13.364	0.001
Residual	645.084	363	1.777		
Total	1120.048	383			

According to the information presented in the table above, the significance level of the regression model is lower than 0.05 (Sig<0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded

that the overall regression model is statistically significant, and communication styles and early maladaptive schemas can predict marital emotional burnout among couples in Ardabil City. Subsequently, to examine the predictive contribution of the

dimensions of communication styles and early maladaptive schemas, the coefficient table was used. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 4. Results of the Predictive Contributions of Communication Styles and Early Maladaptive Schemas as Predictor Variables in Predicting Marital Emotional Burnout Among Couples in Ardabil City Based on Standardized and Unstandardized Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t Statistic	Significance Level
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
1					
Constant	1.416	0.609		2.324	0.021
Constructive Communication	-0.055	0.034	-0.081	-1.610	0.108
Demand-Withdraw Communication	0.056	0.037	0.078	1.533	0.126
Wife-Demand/Husband-Withdraw Pattern	0.105	0.038	0.146	2.773	0.006
Husband-Demand/Wife-Withdraw Pattern	0.055	0.038	0.073	1.437	0.152
Mutual Withdrawal	-0.079	0.039	-0.111	-2.042	0.042
Emotional Deprivation	0.141	0.063	0.118	2.241	0.026
Abandonment/Instability	-0.100	0.062	-0.086	-1.623	0.105
Mistrust/Abuse	0.010	0.061	0.008	0.155	0.877
Social Isolation/Alienation	0.197	0.065	0.161	3.025	0.003
Defectiveness/Shame	0.037	0.061	0.031	0.605	0.546
Failure	0.097	0.058	0.083	1.687	0.092
Dependence/Incompetence	0.122	0.062	0.102	1.968	0.050
Vulnerability to Harm	0.047	0.065	0.037	0.715	0.478
Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self	-0.075	0.062	-0.066	-1.219	0.224
Subjugation	0.132	0.060	0.112	2.194	0.029
Self-Sacrifice	0.061	0.060	0.051	1.026	0.306
Emotional Inhibition	0.002	0.062	0.002	0.033	0.974
Unrelenting Standards	-0.094	0.059	-0.082	-1.583	0.114
Entitlement/Grandiosity	-0.020	0.061	-0.016	-0.327	0.744
Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline	0.013	0.062	0.010	0.203	0.839

According to the results presented in the table above, among communication styles, the predictive contributions of the wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern ($\beta = 0.146$) and mutual withdrawal ($\beta = -0.111$) were statistically significant in predicting marital emotional burnout. Among early maladaptive schemas, the predictive contributions of emotional deprivation ($\beta = 0.118$), social isolation/alienation ($\beta = 0.161$), dependence/incompetence ($\beta = 0.102$), and

subjugation ($\beta = 0.112$) were also statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicated that communication styles and early maladaptive schemas play a significant role in predicting marital emotional burnout among couples. In other words, couples who exhibited more dysfunctional communication patterns and higher levels of early maladaptive schemas experienced greater

levels of emotional burnout in their marital relationships. These findings suggest that marital emotional burnout is not merely a consequence of overt conflicts between couples; rather, it is the outcome of a gradual and multidimensional process in which deep cognitive structures, emotional reactions, and dysfunctional behavioral patterns mutually influence one another, ultimately leading to the depletion of emotional resources within the relationship.

The findings of the present study regarding communication styles are consistent with previous research demonstrating that the quality of couples' communication interactions is one of the most important determinants of marital relationship health and stability. Previous studies have shown that dysfunctional communication patterns, such as aggressive, avoidant, or passive communication, are generally associated with increased marital conflicts, reduced intimacy, and decreased marital satisfaction. In contrast, assertive and empathy-based communication styles may serve a protective role against emotional depletion within relationships. This finding is consistent with the results of *Torabi et al. (2025)*, who demonstrated that dysfunctional communication patterns and difficulties in emotion regulation are associated with increased chronic marital conflicts and reduced relationship quality. Furthermore, the findings of the present study are in line with those of *Grabowski (2023)*, who emphasized that weaknesses in emotional and communicative interactions can contribute to marital dissatisfaction and the gradual erosion

of marital relationships. The explanation for this finding can be understood through the fundamental role of communication in regulating interpersonal emotions. In marital relationships, communication is not merely a means of exchanging information; rather, it is the primary mechanism through which emotional support, psychological security, and intimacy are conveyed and experienced. When couples are unable to express their emotional needs, concerns, and conflicts in adaptive ways, negative emotions gradually accumulate, creating a cycle of misunderstanding, emotional frustration, and emotional distance. The persistence of this condition transforms the relationship from a source of psychological support into a source of tension and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, dysfunctional communication styles may contribute to couples' emotional burnout by reducing empathy, impairing problem-solving processes, and weakening emotional security within the relationship.

On the other hand, the findings of the present study revealed that early maladaptive schemas also made a significant contribution to predicting marital emotional burnout. This finding is consistent with Young's theoretical framework and previous studies emphasizing the role of maladaptive cognitive structures in interpersonal and marital problems. *Grabowski (2023)* demonstrated that the severity of early maladaptive schemas is significantly associated with reduced marital bonding quality and impaired emotional relationships between couples. Moreover, the findings of *Meera et al. (2026)* and *Torabi et al. (2025)* indicate that maladaptive schemas

can contribute to chronic conflicts and marital dissatisfaction through their effects on emotion regulation, attachment styles, and communication patterns. The psychological explanation of these findings can be attributed to the deep-rooted and enduring nature of early maladaptive schemas. Consistent with the present study, previous research (*Janovsky et al., 2023; Siri et al., 2025; Sójta & Strzelecki, 2023*) indicates that these schemas are stable cognitive-emotional patterns that develop during childhood and function as perceptual filters in adulthood. Consequently, individuals with activated maladaptive schemas interpret interpersonal events not based on objective reality, but through the lens of their established emotional beliefs. For example, an individual with an abandonment schema may interpret ordinary behaviors of a spouse, such as temporarily reduced attention or mental preoccupation, as signs of rejection or lack of affection. These negative cognitive interpretations can activate feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and anger, leading to controlling, dependent, or avoidant behaviors. Over time, such patterns not only reduce the quality of couples' interactions but also deplete the emotional resources of the relationship and create conditions conducive to the development of marital emotional burnout.

Furthermore, the findings of the present study are consistent with *Kover et al. (2024)*, *Lesani Behzadkalai et al. (2025)*, and *Meara et al. (2026)*, suggesting that early maladaptive schemas and communication styles should not be considered completely independent factors; rather, these two

variables operate within an interactive and reinforcing cycle. In fact, maladaptive schemas can shape individuals' communication patterns, while dysfunctional communication styles can, in turn, activate and reinforce maladaptive schemas. For instance, an individual with an emotional deprivation schema may experience difficulty expressing emotional needs and consequently adopt passive or avoidant communication styles. This communication pattern may reduce the emotional support received from the spouse and ultimately strengthen the individual's belief that they do not receive sufficient affection and attention. Therefore, the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and communication styles can be considered a reciprocal and cyclical relationship that plays an important role in the persistence of marital emotional burnout.

The findings of the present study are also consistent with contemporary approaches to couple therapy, particularly Emotion-Focused Therapy and Schema Therapy. These approaches emphasize that marital problems are not merely the result of deficiencies in behavioral skills; rather, they originate from unmet emotional needs, maladaptive beliefs, and deep attachment patterns. The study by *Zamani et al. (2023)* also demonstrated that interventions based on schema therapy and emotion regulation can contribute to improving marital relationship quality and reducing emotional distress among couples. Accordingly, the findings of the present study support perspectives suggesting that effective interventions in the field of couple therapy should focus not only on modifying

communication behaviors but also on identifying and modifying maladaptive cognitive structures.

Overall, the results of the present study indicate that marital emotional burnout is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the complex interaction among cognitive, emotional, and communicative structures. Dysfunctional communication styles and early maladaptive schemas can both directly and indirectly contribute to reduced intimacy, increased conflicts, and the depletion of emotional resources within marital relationships. These findings highlight the necessity of simultaneously considering cognitive and communicative dimensions in explaining marital problems and suggest that effective therapeutic interventions should focus not only on improving communication behaviors but also on identifying and modifying maladaptive beliefs and schemas.

- Research Limitations

Despite the valuable findings of the present study, this research, like other studies, was subject to several limitations. The use of self-report instruments may have influenced the results due to response bias and participants' tendency to present a more favorable image of themselves. Furthermore, the correlational nature of the present study limits the possibility of drawing definitive causal conclusions. In addition, conducting the study within a specific cultural context may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as communication patterns and the experience of emotions in marital relationships can be influenced by cultural

and social factors. Therefore, future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal designs and causal models to examine the role of mediating and moderating variables, such as attachment style, emotion regulation, psychological resilience, and marital satisfaction, in the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and marital emotional burnout.

- Practical Implications

Based on the findings of the present study, the following practical recommendations are proposed to enhance the quality of marital relationships and reduce emotional burnout among couples:

- Organizing communication skills training workshops for couples with an emphasis on conflict resolution and empathy.
- Applying the schema therapy approach in couple therapy interventions and family counseling programs.
- Incorporating emotion regulation training into therapeutic programs for couples.
- Implementing screening programs for early maladaptive schemas in premarital counseling centers.
- Designing preventive interventions to reduce marital emotional burnout among couples at risk.
- Providing specialized training for family counselors regarding the identification of dysfunctional communication patterns and maladaptive schemas.

- Developing educational content on healthy marital relationships and effective communication skills through media platforms and educational centers.

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