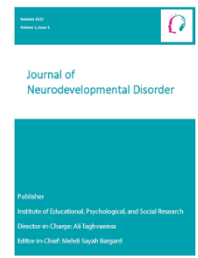




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# Structural Modeling of the Mediating Role of Self-Compassion in the Relationship Between Family Cohesion and Sexual Satisfaction with Marital Adjustment Among Married Students of Islamic Azad University, Rasht

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between family cohesion and sexual satisfaction with marital adjustment among married university students.

**Methods and Materials:** This study employed an applied, descriptive-correlational design using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all married students of Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, during the 2024–2025 academic year (N = 1,140), from whom 290 participants were selected through proportional stratified random sampling based on the Morgan table. Data were collected using Samani's Family Cohesion Questionnaire, Larson's Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire, Neff's Self-Compassion Scale, and Spanier's Marital Adjustment Scale. The validity and reliability of the instruments had been confirmed in previous studies. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 21 for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS version 3 for inferential analysis.

**Findings:** The results indicated that family cohesion and sexual satisfaction had significant direct effects on marital adjustment. Both variables also showed significant positive relationships with self-compassion, which in turn significantly predicted marital adjustment. Structural equation modeling revealed that self-compassion played a significant mediating role in the relationship between family cohesion and marital adjustment, as well as between sexual satisfaction and marital adjustment. The measurement and structural models demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity, with factor loadings exceeding 0.50, AVE values above 0.50, and satisfactory discriminant validity based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Additionally, the structural model exhibited adequate explanatory power (R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.527 for self-compassion and 0.732 for marital adjustment) and strong overall model fit (GOF = 0.620).

**Conclusion:** Enhancing family cohesion and sexual satisfaction, along with fostering self-compassion, may contribute to improved marital functioning and relational stability among married individuals.

**Keywords:** Family cohesion, sexual satisfaction, self-compassion, marital adjustment, structural equation modeling.

## 1. Introduction

Marital adjustment is widely recognized as one of the central indicators of relationship quality and stability within intimate partnerships, reflecting the degree to which spouses achieve harmony, satisfaction, and effective functioning in their shared life. From a psychological perspective, marital adjustment encompasses multiple dimensions, including emotional closeness, communication patterns, conflict resolution, and mutual satisfaction, all of which contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and families (Atkinson et al., 2017). Contemporary research emphasizes that marital relationships are dynamic systems influenced by a complex interplay of interpersonal, familial, and individual psychological factors. In this context, understanding the determinants of marital adjustment has become a major focus of empirical and theoretical inquiry, particularly in populations undergoing developmental transitions such as university students who are simultaneously managing academic, social, and marital roles.

One of the key interpersonal factors influencing marital adjustment is sexual satisfaction, which has been consistently identified as a fundamental component of marital quality. Sexual satisfaction is not merely a physical experience but also reflects emotional intimacy, communication, and mutual responsiveness between partners. Empirical studies have demonstrated that higher levels of sexual satisfaction are associated with greater marital adjustment and relationship stability, as satisfying sexual interactions foster emotional bonding and reduce relational tension (Unal & Yagmur, 2024). Similarly, research indicates that sexual satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intimacy and marital satisfaction, highlighting its integrative function within the marital system (Obradovic & Codina, 2021). Moreover, constructs such as sexual self-esteem and sexual self-disclosure have been shown to predict marital satisfaction, suggesting that individuals' perceptions and expressions of their sexual selves significantly shape relational outcomes (Payafar & Soltani Asl, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of considering sexual satisfaction as a multidimensional construct embedded within broader relational and psychological processes.

In addition to sexual factors, family-related variables, particularly family cohesion, play a critical role in shaping marital adjustment. Family cohesion refers to the emotional bonding, support, and sense of unity among family

members, which provides a foundational context for the development of interpersonal skills and relational expectations. Individuals raised in cohesive family environments are more likely to internalize adaptive communication patterns, emotional regulation strategies, and supportive interaction styles, which they subsequently transfer to their marital relationships. Studies have shown that family cohesion is positively associated with marital satisfaction and adjustment, often through its influence on psychological constructs such as self-esteem and psychological security (Namani et al., 2025). Furthermore, broader contextual factors, including neighborhood cohesion and marital beliefs, have also been linked to marital satisfaction, indicating that relational functioning is embedded within multiple layers of social influence (Wondimu & Andualem, 2024). These findings suggest that family cohesion serves as both a direct and indirect determinant of marital adjustment by shaping individuals' relational schemas and coping mechanisms.

While interpersonal and contextual factors are critical, individual psychological characteristics have gained increasing attention as mediators in the relationship between external variables and marital outcomes. Among these, self-compassion has emerged as a particularly important construct. Self-compassion, as conceptualized by Neff, involves treating oneself with kindness, recognizing one's experiences as part of the common human condition, and maintaining balanced awareness of emotions (Neff, 2003). This construct contrasts with self-criticism and harsh self-judgment, offering a more adaptive framework for emotional regulation and psychological resilience. Theoretical perspectives, including compassion-focused therapy, emphasize that self-compassion enhances individuals' capacity to manage distress, regulate negative emotions, and engage in supportive interpersonal behaviors (Gilbert, 2018). Consequently, self-compassion is not only a personal resource but also a relational asset that can improve the quality of interactions within intimate relationships.

Empirical evidence supports the significant role of self-compassion in marital functioning. Studies have shown that self-compassion is positively associated with marital satisfaction and psychological well-being, often acting as a mediator between relational variables and outcomes (Johnson & White, 2022). For instance, individuals with higher levels of self-compassion are better able to cope with marital conflicts, exhibit greater empathy toward their partners, and maintain emotional stability, all of which contribute to improved marital adjustment. Additionally,

self-compassion has been linked to reduced marital burnout and increased forgiveness, highlighting its protective role in maintaining relationship quality (Sharifi et al., 2024). Other research has demonstrated that self-compassion can predict marital happiness through its interaction with cultural orientations such as individualism and collectivism, indicating its relevance across diverse sociocultural contexts (Dehghan Hesar & Kimiaei, 2023). These findings collectively suggest that self-compassion functions as a key psychological mechanism through which individuals navigate the challenges of marital life.

Recent intervention-based studies further underscore the importance of self-compassion in enhancing marital outcomes. Compassion-focused therapeutic approaches have been shown to improve marital adjustment, psychological well-being, and emotional functioning among individuals experiencing relational difficulties (Babsour & Karimi, 2025). Similarly, interventions targeting self-compassion have demonstrated effectiveness in improving sexual self-efficacy and reducing negative meta-emotions, particularly among women affected by relational stressors (Mardani & Tabaghdehi, 2025). These findings highlight the practical significance of self-compassion as a modifiable factor that can be targeted in therapeutic and educational programs aimed at strengthening marital relationships. Furthermore, compassion-based cognitive-behavioral interventions have shown promising results in enhancing self-esteem and emotional resilience, which are closely related to interpersonal relationship (Bridge et al., 2024).

The mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between interpersonal variables and marital outcomes has been increasingly explored in recent research. For example, studies have demonstrated that self-compassion mediates the relationship between psychological flexibility and marital satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who are more flexible and compassionate toward themselves are better able to maintain satisfying relationships (Seyyedjafari et al., 2025). Similarly, research has indicated that self-compassion mediates the relationship between sexual distress and psychological variables such as body image and emotion regulation, further highlighting its integrative role in relational functioning (Rasouli et al., 2024). These findings align with broader theoretical frameworks that conceptualize marital relationships as systems influenced by both internal and external processes, with mediating variables playing a crucial role in linking these domains.

In addition to self-compassion, other mediating mechanisms have been identified in the literature, including

marital burnout, loneliness, and cognitive-emotional processes. For instance, marital burnout has been found to mediate the relationship between sexual performance and marital satisfaction, indicating that the effects of sexual variables on marital outcomes are often indirect and mediated by psychological states (Abbasian Haghverdi & Sabour Esmaeili, 2023). Similarly, constructs such as theory of mind and executive functions have been shown to influence marital burnout through complex mediational pathways, highlighting the multifaceted nature of marital dynamics (Babaei et al., 2024). These studies collectively emphasize the importance of adopting a structural modeling approach to capture the complexity of relationships among variables and to identify the mechanisms through which they influence marital adjustment.

Despite the growing body of research on marital adjustment, sexual satisfaction, family cohesion, and self-compassion, there remains a need for integrative models that simultaneously examine these variables within a comprehensive framework. Many existing studies have focused on isolated relationships or limited sets of variables, thereby overlooking the interconnected nature of these constructs. Furthermore, there is a relative scarcity of research examining these relationships among married university students, a population characterized by unique developmental and contextual challenges. Given the increasing prevalence of marital difficulties and the importance of promoting healthy relationships in early adulthood, it is essential to investigate the combined effects of familial, sexual, and psychological factors on marital adjustment.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to address this gap by employing structural equation modeling to examine the direct and indirect relationships among family cohesion, sexual satisfaction, self-compassion, and marital adjustment among married students. By integrating these variables into a single model, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying marital adjustment and to identify key factors that can be targeted in interventions. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the theoretical literature on marital relationships as well as to inform practical strategies for enhancing relationship quality in young couples. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to model the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between family cohesion and sexual satisfaction with marital adjustment among married students of Islamic Azad University, Rasht.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

In the present study, which aims to structurally model the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between family cohesion and sexual satisfaction with marital adjustment among married students of Islamic Azad University, Rasht, the research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The study was conducted using an approach focused on analyzing structural relationships among variables, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine both direct and indirect effects among the variables.

The statistical population consisted of all married students enrolled at the Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year, totaling 1,140 individuals. Considering the finite population size, the sample size was estimated at 290 participants based on the Morgan table, and the same number of questionnaires was distributed among the selected individuals. The sampling method was proportional stratified random sampling, such that the population was first categorized based on different faculties, and then participants were randomly selected in proportion to the size of each stratum. Inclusion criteria comprised willingness to participate, age range between 20 and 50 years, marital status, residence in Rasht, and absence of the use of medications affecting mental health. Exclusion criteria included unwillingness to continue participation or concerns regarding the disclosure of personal information.

### 2.2. Measures

Larson's Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire was developed by Larson to assess individuals' level of satisfaction with their sexual relationship within marriage. This instrument consists of 25 items designed to evaluate various dimensions of sexual satisfaction, including emotional intimacy, communication, and physical fulfillment. Responses are rated on a Likert-type scale, typically ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with higher scores indicating greater sexual satisfaction. The questionnaire does not include formal subscales in its original structure but provides an overall composite score reflecting sexual satisfaction. Previous studies have reported acceptable levels of construct validity and internal consistency reliability for this instrument, confirming its

suitability for research in marital and sexual relationship contexts.

Samani's Family Cohesion Questionnaire was developed by Samani to measure the degree of emotional bonding, support, and unity among family members. The instrument consists of 20 items that assess the overall cohesion within the family system, focusing on aspects such as emotional closeness, mutual support, and shared values. Items are scored using a Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting stronger family cohesion. The questionnaire is typically considered unidimensional, yielding a total score that represents the overall level of cohesion. Previous research has confirmed the content and construct validity of this tool, and its reliability has been supported through acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients, indicating its appropriateness for use in family and marital studies.

The Self-Compassion Scale was developed by Kristin Neff in 2003 to assess individuals' self-compassion in response to personal difficulties. This widely used instrument consists of 26 items organized into six subscales: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Responses are measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from almost never to almost always, and negatively worded items are reverse-scored. Higher total scores indicate greater levels of self-compassion. The scale provides both subscale scores and an overall self-compassion score. Numerous studies have demonstrated strong psychometric properties for this instrument, including high internal consistency, construct validity, and cross-cultural reliability, making it a robust tool for psychological research.

Spanier's Marital Adjustment Questionnaire, also known as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), was developed by Graham B. Spanier in 1976 to assess the quality of marital relationships and the level of adjustment between spouses. The instrument consists of 32 items that evaluate four key subscales: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression. Items are scored using a combination of Likert-type and frequency-based response formats, with higher scores indicating better marital adjustment. The total score represents overall relationship quality, while subscale scores provide insight into specific relational dimensions. Extensive empirical research has confirmed the validity and reliability of the DAS, with consistently high internal consistency coefficients and strong evidence of construct validity across diverse populations.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Finally, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 21 and SmartPLS version 3 at both descriptive and inferential levels. At the descriptive level, indices such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were reported. At the inferential level, structural equation modeling with the partial least squares (PLS) approach was employed to test the research model and to examine the mediating role of self-compassion.

### 3. Findings and Results

In this section, the descriptive findings of the study are presented. First, the demographic characteristics of the sample were examined. Accordingly, out of the total of 290 married students participating in the study, 167 individuals (57.59%) were male and 123 individuals (42.41%) were female, indicating that males constituted a larger proportion of the sample. In terms of age distribution, 35 participants (12.07%) were in the age range of 25–30 years, 176 participants (60.69%) were in the range of 31–40 years, and 79 participants (27.24%) were in the range of 41–50 years; therefore, the highest frequency belonged to the 31–40 age group. Furthermore, examination of marital duration showed that 103 participants (35.52%) had 1–7 years of marital life, 92 participants (31.72%) had 8–15 years, 75 participants

(25.86%) had 16–22 years, and 20 participants (6.90%) had more than 23 years of marital experience; thus, the majority had 1–7 years of marital life.

Subsequently, descriptive findings related to the main study variables, including family cohesion, sexual satisfaction, self-compassion, and marital adjustment, were presented. The results indicated that among the components of family cohesion, the highest mean was related to mother-related cohesion (48.16), while the lowest mean was associated with marital relations (7.59). In the sexual satisfaction variable, the component of desire for sexual relations had the highest mean (27.98) and also exhibited the greatest dispersion (standard deviation = 3.741). Regarding self-compassion, the highest mean was related to mindfulness (12.60), while the lowest was related to isolation (10.97). In addition, within the marital adjustment variable, affectional expression showed the highest mean (18.27), whereas dyadic cohesion had the lowest mean (15.38).

Overall, the descriptive statistics presented reflect the participants' responses to the questionnaire items and provide a general picture of the levels of the variables under investigation in the study sample, thereby establishing the basis for inferential analyses and testing of the research model.

**Table 1**

*Normality Test of Research Variables*

Variables	Components	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Statistic	Significance Level	Test Result
Family Cohesion	Cohesion with Father	1.049	0.015	Non-normal
	Cohesion with Mother	1.030	0.032	Non-normal
	Duration of Interaction	1.047	0.027	Non-normal
	Location	1.064	0.019	Non-normal
	Decision Making	1.038	0.034	Non-normal
	Emotional Communication	0.052	0.028	Non-normal
	Marital Relations	0.073	0.035	Non-normal
	Parent–Child Relationship	1.258	0.014	Non-normal
Sexual Satisfaction	Desire for Sexual Relations	1.070	0.012	Non-normal
	Sexual Attitude	1.286	0.023	Non-normal
	Quality of Sexual Life	1.082	0.022	Non-normal
	Sexual Adjustment	1.276	0.007	Non-normal
Self-Compassion	Self-Kindness	1.328	0.019	Non-normal
	Self-Judgment	0.094	0.036	Non-normal
	Common Humanity	0.135	0.014	Non-normal
	Isolation	0.146	0.042	Non-normal
	Mindfulness	0.085	0.033	Non-normal
	Over-Identification	1.336	0.016	Non-normal
Marital Adjustment	Marital Satisfaction	1.029	0.031	Non-normal
	Dyadic Cohesion	1.048	0.005	Non-normal
	Dyadic Consensus	1.548	0.014	Non-normal
	Affectional Expression	1.312	0.024	Non-normal

According to Table 1, all research variables were non-normally distributed. Therefore, the distributions of the variables do not follow a normal distribution.

In this study, structural equation modeling using the partial least squares (PLS) approach and SmartPLS software was employed to test the research hypotheses. Data analysis was conducted based on the PLS algorithm, which consists of two main components: evaluation of model fit and testing of research hypotheses. Model fit is assessed in three sections: the measurement model, the structural model, and the overall model, to determine the extent to which the

proposed research model fits the data collected from the statistical sample. After confirming the model fit, the researcher proceeds to examine and test the research hypotheses. The PLS software, after receiving the relevant variable data, presents the final research model—comprising the main part of the analysis—in the form of Figure 1 (standardized path coefficients) and Figure 2 (t-values for significance), and all analyses, including measurement, structural, and overall model evaluation, as well as hypothesis testing, are conducted based on these outputs.

**Table 2**

*Factor Loadings of Model Constructs*

Components	Family Cohesion	Sexual Satisfaction	Self-Compassion	Marital Adjustment
Cohesion with Father	0.736			
Cohesion with Mother	0.625			
Duration of Interaction	0.747			
Location	0.725			
Decision Making	0.791			
Emotional Communication	0.643			
Marital Relations	0.716			
Parent–Child Relationship	0.623			
Desire for Sexual Relations		0.751		
Sexual Attitude		0.702		
Quality of Sexual Life		0.865		
Sexual Adjustment		0.756		
Self-Kindness			0.782	
Self-Judgment			0.834	
Common Humanity			0.743	
Isolation			0.769	
Mindfulness			0.667	
Over-Identification			0.749	
Marital Satisfaction				0.945
Dyadic Cohesion				0.885
Dyadic Consensus				0.933
Affectional Expression				0.844

As can be observed in Table 2, the factor loadings for all constructs in the model are greater than 0.50; therefore, the reliability of the measurement models is acceptable, indicating a good fit of the measurement model.

Convergent validity examines the extent to which each construct correlates with its respective indicators. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE), calculated by the PLS software, is used for this purpose. An AVE value of 0.50 or higher is considered acceptable.

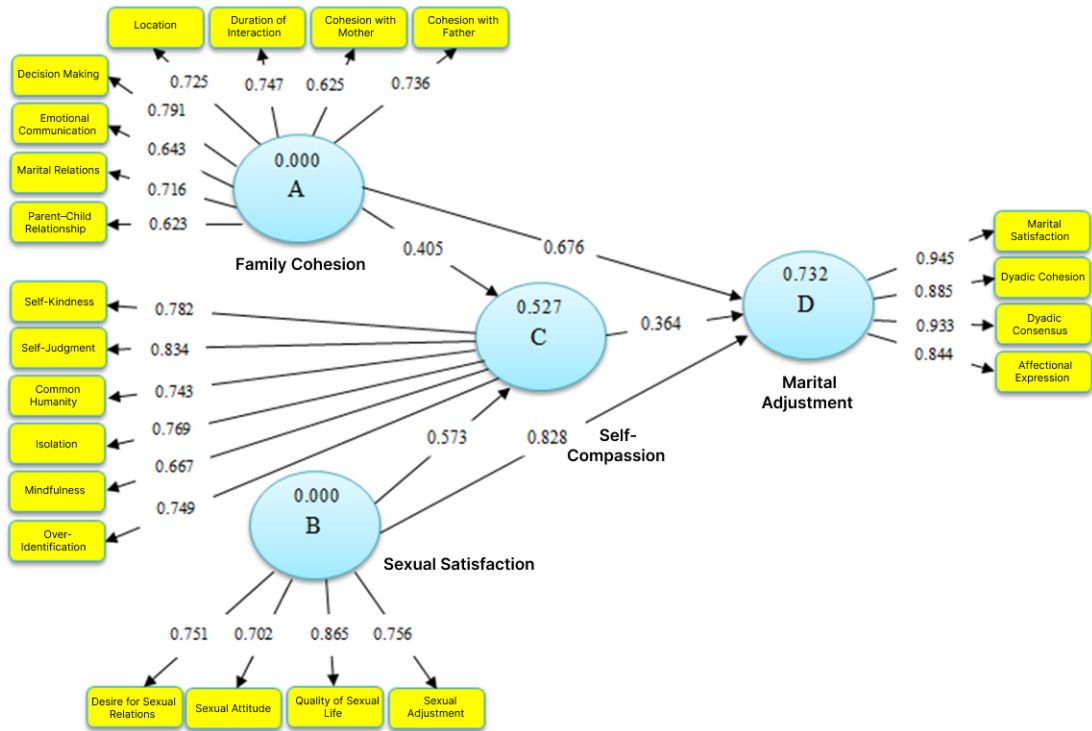
**Table 3**

*Evaluation of the Outer Model*

Main Model Variables	AVE
Family Cohesion	0.511
Sexual Satisfaction	0.578
Self-Compassion	0.617
Marital Adjustment	0.658

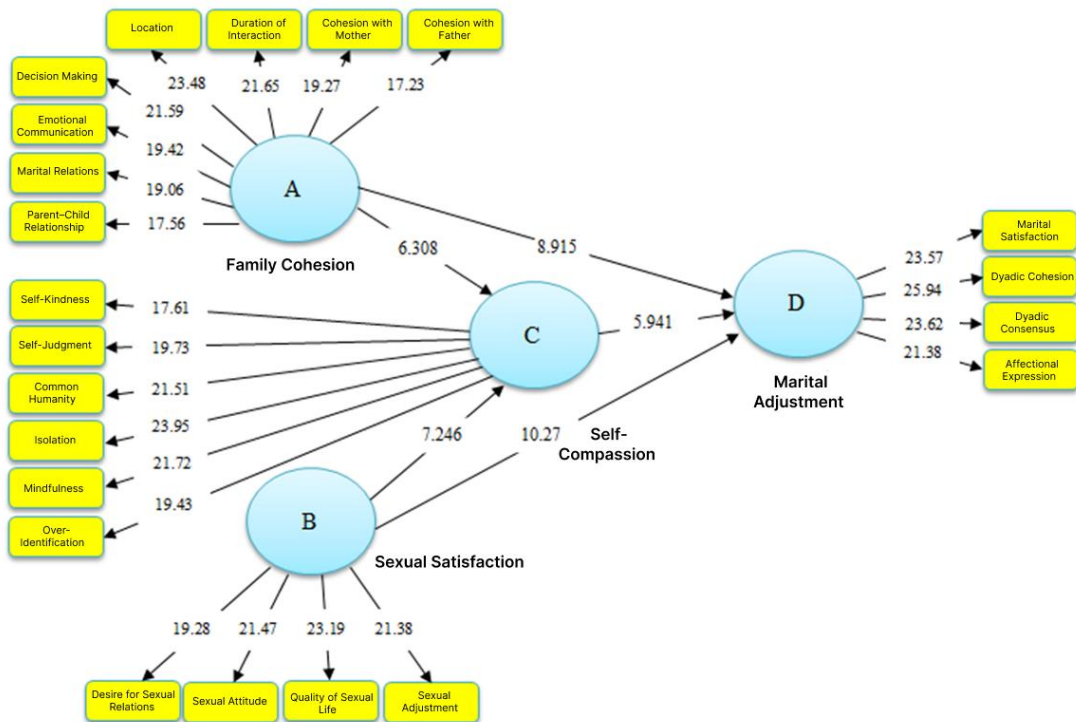
**Figure 1**

*Model with Beta Values*



**Figure 2**

*Model with T-Values*



To assess discriminant validity, a matrix is recommended that is similar to the matrix presented in the SmartPLS output under the section “Latent Variable Correlations,” with the difference that the main diagonal contains the square roots of the AVE values of the latent constructs. These diagonal

values are typically compared against inter-construct correlations; thus, the Fornell–Larcker matrix for examining the discriminant validity of the research model is presented as follows. It should be noted that only first-order latent variables are included in the Fornell–Larcker matrix.

**Table 4**

*Fornell–Larcker Matrix for Assessing Discriminant Validity*

Research Variables	Family Cohesion	Sexual Satisfaction	Self-Compassion	Marital Adjustment
Family Cohesion	0.67			
Sexual Satisfaction	0.57	0.59		
Self-Compassion	0.43	0.48	0.53	
Marital Adjustment	0.39	0.42	0.45	0.49

According to Table 4, the square root of the AVE values for the latent variables, which are located on the main diagonal of the matrix, are greater than the inter-construct correlations positioned in the lower-left cells. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in the present study, each construct has stronger associations with its own indicators than with other constructs. In other words, the discriminant validity of the model is at an acceptable level.

The second criterion for evaluating the fit of the structural model in a study is the  $R^2$  coefficients of the endogenous (dependent) variables.  $R^2$  is an index that reflects the extent to which an exogenous variable explains the variance of an endogenous variable. It serves as a measure linking the measurement and structural components of the model and indicates the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables.

**Table 5**

*R<sup>2</sup> Values*

Variables	R <sup>2</sup> Values
Family Cohesion	—
Sexual Satisfaction	—
Self-Compassion	0.527
Marital Adjustment	0.732

According to Table 5, the obtained  $R^2$  values indicate a relatively good fit of the structural model.

The overall model fit is assessed using the Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index. Based on the average communalities of the constructs (i.e., the communalities of first-order constructs) and the average  $R^2$  values of all endogenous constructs, the GOF value for the overall fit of the present research model is calculated as follows:

$$\text{GOF} = \sqrt{((\text{Communalities}) \times (R^2))} = \sqrt{(0.612 \times 0.629)} = 0.620$$

Considering the three benchmark values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36, which represent weak, moderate, and strong fit respectively, the obtained GOF value of 0.620 indicates a strong overall fit of the research model.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the structural relationships among family cohesion, sexual satisfaction, self-compassion, and marital adjustment, with a particular focus on the mediating role of self-compassion among married university students. The findings indicated that both family cohesion and sexual satisfaction exert direct and significant effects on marital adjustment. In addition, both variables were positively and significantly associated with self-compassion, and self-compassion itself had a significant effect on marital adjustment. Most importantly, the results of the structural equation modeling confirmed that self-compassion plays a meaningful mediating role in the relationships between family cohesion and marital adjustment, as well as between sexual satisfaction and marital adjustment. These findings provide empirical

support for a multidimensional model of marital adjustment that integrates interpersonal, familial, and intrapersonal psychological factors.

The direct effect of family cohesion on marital adjustment observed in this study is consistent with theoretical and empirical perspectives emphasizing the foundational role of family-of-origin experiences in shaping adult relational functioning. Individuals raised in cohesive family environments are more likely to develop adaptive communication patterns, emotional regulation skills, and relational schemas that facilitate harmonious marital interactions. This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating that family cohesion is positively associated with marital satisfaction and relational stability, often through its influence on psychological security and self-related constructs (Namani et al., 2025). Furthermore, broader contextual frameworks suggest that cohesion at multiple levels, including family and community, contributes to relational well-being, reinforcing the idea that marital adjustment is embedded within a network of social influences (Wondimu & Andualem, 2024). Therefore, the significant effect of family cohesion in the present study can be interpreted as reflecting the enduring impact of early relational environments on later marital outcomes.

Similarly, the direct relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital adjustment observed in this study corroborates a substantial body of literature identifying sexual satisfaction as a core component of marital quality. Sexual satisfaction encompasses not only physical fulfillment but also emotional intimacy, communication, and mutual responsiveness, all of which contribute to the overall functioning of the marital relationship. The present findings are in line with studies indicating that higher levels of sexual satisfaction are associated with greater marital adjustment and relational harmony (Unal & Yagmur, 2024). Moreover, the integrative role of sexual satisfaction in linking emotional intimacy and marital satisfaction has been highlighted in previous research, suggesting that sexual experiences serve as a key domain through which partners express and reinforce their emotional connection (Obradovic & Codina, 2021). Additionally, research on sexual self-esteem and self-disclosure further supports the importance of sexual variables in predicting marital satisfaction and adjustment (Payafar & Soltani Asl, 2024). Taken together, these findings emphasize that sexual satisfaction is a central determinant of marital adjustment and should be considered in both theoretical models and practical interventions.

A central contribution of the present study lies in demonstrating the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationships between family cohesion, sexual satisfaction, and marital adjustment. The positive association between family cohesion and self-compassion suggests that individuals who experience supportive and cohesive family environments are more likely to develop a compassionate and accepting attitude toward themselves. This finding is consistent with theoretical perspectives on self-compassion, which emphasize the role of early relational experiences in shaping self-related processes (Neff, 2003). Moreover, the significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and self-compassion indicates that individuals who are more satisfied in their sexual relationships may experience greater emotional security and self-acceptance, which in turn enhances their capacity for self-compassion.

The direct effect of self-compassion on marital adjustment observed in this study further underscores its importance as a psychological resource in intimate relationships. Self-compassion enables individuals to regulate negative emotions, reduce self-criticism, and approach interpersonal challenges with greater empathy and understanding. This finding is consistent with the principles of compassion-focused therapy, which highlight the role of compassion in promoting emotional well-being and improving interpersonal functioning (Gilbert, 2018). Empirical studies have also demonstrated that self-compassion is positively associated with marital satisfaction and psychological well-being, often acting as a mediator between relational variables and outcomes (Johnson & White, 2022). Additionally, self-compassion has been shown to reduce marital burnout and enhance forgiveness, further contributing to relationship stability (Sharifi et al., 2024). These findings suggest that self-compassion functions as a key mechanism through which individuals translate interpersonal and contextual experiences into positive marital outcomes.

The mediating role of self-compassion identified in this study is further supported by intervention-based research demonstrating the effectiveness of compassion-focused approaches in improving marital adjustment and related outcomes. For instance, group therapy based on self-compassion has been shown to enhance psychological well-being and marital adjustment among women experiencing relational difficulties (Babsour & Karimi, 2025). Similarly, compassion-focused therapy has been found to improve sexual self-efficacy and reduce negative emotional responses in individuals affected by relational stressors

(Mardani & Tabaghdehi, 2025). These findings indicate that self-compassion is not only a theoretical construct but also a practical target for interventions aimed at enhancing marital functioning. Furthermore, compassion-based cognitive-behavioral interventions have demonstrated efficacy in improving self-esteem and emotional resilience, which are closely related to relational quality (Bridge et al., 2024).

The present findings are also consistent with studies examining the mediating role of self-compassion in various psychological and relational contexts. For example, research has shown that self-compassion mediates the relationship between psychological flexibility and marital satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who are more flexible and compassionate toward themselves are better equipped to maintain satisfying relationships (Seyyedjafari et al., 2025). Similarly, studies have indicated that self-compassion mediates the relationship between sexual distress and psychological variables such as body image and emotion regulation, highlighting its integrative role in linking individual and relational processes (Rasouli et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the notion that self-compassion serves as a bridge between internal psychological states and external relational outcomes.

In addition to self-compassion, the broader literature highlights the role of other mediating variables in marital relationships, further supporting the use of structural modeling approaches. For instance, marital burnout has been identified as a mediator in the relationship between sexual performance and marital satisfaction, indicating that the effects of sexual variables on marital outcomes are often indirect (Abbasian Haghverdi & Sabour Esmaeili, 2023). Similarly, cognitive and emotional processes, such as theory of mind and executive functioning, have been shown to influence marital burnout through complex pathways (Babaei et al., 2024). These findings underscore the importance of considering multiple mediating mechanisms when examining marital adjustment and highlight the value of the present study's integrative approach.

Overall, the results of this study support a comprehensive model of marital adjustment in which family cohesion and sexual satisfaction exert both direct and indirect effects through self-compassion. This model is consistent with theoretical frameworks that conceptualize marital relationships as dynamic systems influenced by interactions among interpersonal, contextual, and intrapersonal factors (Atkinson et al., 2017). Furthermore, the findings align with research on marital stability, which emphasizes the importance of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors

in sustaining long-term relationships (Wolvergan & Mahsuri, 2017). By integrating these perspectives, the present study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying marital adjustment and highlights the central role of self-compassion in this process.

The findings also have important implications for clinical and counseling practice. Given the significant role of self-compassion in mediating the effects of family cohesion and sexual satisfaction on marital adjustment, interventions aimed at enhancing self-compassion may be particularly effective in improving marital relationships. Such interventions could include mindfulness-based practices, compassion-focused therapy, and psychoeducational programs designed to promote self-acceptance and emotional regulation. Additionally, addressing sexual satisfaction and family-related factors within therapeutic contexts may further enhance the effectiveness of these interventions, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable improvements in marital adjustment.

The present study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the use of a correlational design limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships among the variables. Second, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce response biases, such as social desirability or recall bias, which could affect the accuracy of the data. Third, cultural factors specific to the study context may influence the observed relationships and should be taken into account in future research.

Future research should build on the findings of the present study by employing longitudinal and experimental designs to examine the causal relationships among family cohesion, sexual satisfaction, self-compassion, and marital adjustment. Additionally, future studies could explore the role of other psychological and contextual variables, such as attachment styles, personality traits, and cultural values, in shaping marital adjustment. Expanding the research to more diverse populations, including different age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultural contexts, would also enhance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the use of mixed-methods approaches could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying marital adjustment by integrating quantitative and qualitative data.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that interventions aimed at improving marital adjustment should adopt a multidimensional approach that addresses familial, sexual, and psychological factors. Educational programs for couples could focus on enhancing

communication skills, emotional intimacy, and sexual satisfaction, while also promoting self-compassion as a key psychological resource. Counselors and therapists may benefit from incorporating compassion-based techniques into their practice to help individuals develop greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy. Additionally, family-based interventions that strengthen cohesion and support within the family system may have long-term benefits for marital adjustment. By addressing these interconnected factors, it is possible to develop more effective strategies for promoting healthy and satisfying marital relationships.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

### 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

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the study and participated in the research with informed consent.

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