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## Research Paper

Investigating the structural model of loneliness and marital commitment with an attitude toward extra-marital relationships with the mediation of identity styles



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Khadijeh Joorbonyan<sup>1</sup> & Amir Qorbanpoor Lafmejani<sup>2\*</sup>

1. Master of Family Counseling, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran.

2. Associate Professor, Department of educational science and counselling, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran.

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The present study aimed to investigate the structural model of loneliness and marital commitment with an attitude toward extra-marital relationships, with the mediation of identity styles in married women and men.

**Methods:** For the research design, we used correlation and structural equation modeling. Statistical population including all married women and men of Ramsar City, among whom 230 individuals were selected through convenience sampling and responded to the Loneliness Scale Russell et al., (1980), Marital Commitment Questionnaire Adams & Jones (1997), Extra-marital Relationships Attitudes Questionnaire Wheatley's, (2008), and Identity Styles Scale Berzonsky (1989). All data were analyzed using SPSS 26, AMOS 24, and Macro Preacher & Hayes' (2008) program.

**Results:** The findings indicated that loneliness and diffuse-avoidant identity styles have a significant and positive effect on the attitude toward extra-marital relationships, while marital commitment and commitment identity style have a significant and negative effect on the attitude toward extra-marital relationships. Bootstrapping results showed that information identity style, diffuse-avoidant identity styles, and commitment identity style play a mediating role in the relationships between loneliness and the attitude toward extra-marital relationships. Marital commitment indirectly affects the attitude toward extra-marital relationships through information identity style and commitment identity style.

**Conclusion:** The research findings, by confirming the influential role of loneliness, marital commitment, and identity styles on extra-marital relationships, provide appropriate implications for work in the field of extra-marital relationships for practitioners in the family domain.

## 1. Introduction

The most fundamental social institution is the family, in which the individual establishes their existence (Goudarzi et al., 2020), and the cornerstone of family formation is marriage, which can have very positive effects on both society and individuals (Salvatore et al., 2020). Marital relationships, as multi-dimensional relationships, are influenced by various factors and are subject to different challenges. One of these challenges is called extramarital relationships (Moller & Vossler,

2015), which can lead to the permanent destruction of the marital relationship (Alvarado, 2020). Extramarital relationships are considered a common phenomenon in the realm of romantic relationships (Garbinsky et al., 2019), generally defined as establishing any kind of emotional and sexual relationship with a third party without the knowledge of the spouse, which violates marital commitment and causes emotional suffering of the betrayed spouse (Jenkins, 2015).

\*Corresponding Author:

Amir Qorbanpoor Lafmejani

Address: Department of educational science and counselling, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran.

E-mail: [qorbanpoorlafmejani@guilan.ac.ir](mailto:qorbanpoorlafmejani@guilan.ac.ir)

Statistics show that 22-25% of men and 11-15% of women have had sex outside of their marital relationship at least once (Harris, 2018). In Iran, the prevalence of extramarital relationships is not known; however, the total of related studies in this field indicates an increase of such relationships (Qanbarikahiani et al., 2023). Some have divided extramarital relationships into two general categories: 1. sexual betrayal and 2. emotional betrayal. Studies show that both categories are equally undesirable, and people respond to both of them in almost the same way (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2018). One of the individual factors affecting the attitude towards extramarital relationships is the feeling of loneliness. So far, a variety of definitions of loneliness have been presented in different sources, and in general, it is considered a negative feeling caused by an individual's understanding of the discrepancy between desired and current social relation (Jahanbakhshi et al., 2024). Therefore, loneliness does not equal being alone but feeling alone (Barjaková et al., 2023). Marriage as a social status is one of the strongest protective factors against adult loneliness. However, the feeling of loneliness is also common in married people, so the quality of marriage will determine whether it is protective against loneliness or vice versa (Dadoo & Dabiri, 2019). Couples with high levels of understanding and marital satisfaction usually experience fewer feelings of loneliness since they enjoy spending more time together (Hsieh & Hawkey, 2018). On the contrary, couples with a lower level of marital satisfaction experience more feelings of loneliness, feel less comfortable in each other's presence and prefer to be lonely (Isanejad & Bagheri, 2018). The result of this apparent lack of connection between the spouses and the feeling of loneliness is likely that one of the parties finds intimacy and connection elsewhere other than in their relationships with their spouse (Allen & Atkins, 2005). Kaya & Şakiroğlu (2023) in their study titled 'Factors Affecting Online Infidelity' concluded that higher loneliness was found to be significantly associated with online infidelity. Nazinejad & Rahmati (2022), in a study titled 'Investigating the Relationships between Loneliness, Alexithymia, and Marital Intimacy in the Inclination towards Marital Betrayal of Couples in the City of Poldokhtar', concluded that the loneliness variable has positive and significant relationships with the inclination towards marital betrayal.

Another factor that plays a role in predicting quality of marital life (Basereh et al., 2024) and then extramarital relationships is marital commitment (Yamaguchi et al., 2017). Marital commitment is considered one of the important variables in a harmonious marriage, and it is also considered as a determination for the continuation

of a shared life. Consequently, it can be said that marital commitment helps interpret why some relationships end while others do not (Hou et al., 2019). Maintaining a satisfying heterosexual relationship is important to the happiness and physical health of many people. Mutuality of commitment is critical to pro-relationship transformation and develops as a process of paying attention to yourself and your spouse repeatedly is a top priority in life (Givertz et al., 2016). Based on the results of (2020), the commitment between couples can influence their reaction to mistakes and misconceptions about each other, leading to constructive or destructive interaction between them. Since marital commitment is considered the strongest and most stable predictor of the stability and quality of marital relationships (Hou et al., 2019), violating it in the form of emotional or sexual relationships, or both, can lead to extramarital relationships, which result in distancing from the fundamental relationships without the consent of the other party (Fife et al., 2013). McKeever (2020), in his study titled 'Why, and to what extent, is sexual infidelity wrong?' concluded that breaking a commitment seems to be at the root of the wrong of sexual infidelity. Arabi Divrazmi et al., (2023) in their study titled 'The structural relationships of The Dark Triad of Personality, emotional inhibition with extramarital relationships with the mediation of attitude towards marital commitment', concluded that There is a negative and significant relationship between marital commitment and attitude towards betrayal.

The relationships between different variables are not always linear. Therefore, there is a possibility that different variables have a mediating role between two variables. Among the variables that can play a mediating role between attitudes towards extramarital relationships, feelings of loneliness, and commitment are identity formation styles. Research shows that, on the one hand, identity styles are an important factor in extramarital relationships (Khasmakhi & Salahin, 2018) and on the other hand, they are related to the feeling of loneliness (Malli et al., 2023) and marital commitment (Berzonsky, 2011). Identity is a conceptual structure combined with self-exploration and self-regulation, enabling individuals to have different styles and approaches to theorizing about themselves, with their performances reflecting different "self" theories (Rafezi & Hakami, 2020). Couple's identity captures not only the dynamic between partners but also their relationship status (Emery et al., 2021). Therefore, knowing the identity style of each person can be an acceptable predictor of the quality of the relationship in the future. By carefully examining many people involved in cheating, you can get solid clues about the effect of these

two variables on the tendency of people to cheat (Qanbarikahiani et al., 2023). The more people have a clearer understanding of their identity, the more importance they attach to their personal relationships, and they see adherence to commitments as a sign of intellectual and personality maturity. For example, people with diffuse-avoidant identity styles avoid dealing with personal problems, conflicts, and decisions as a dysfunctional identity style. In a way, the personality of people with this identity style has positive relationships with emotion-based coping strategies, an expectation of external control, neuroticism, ambivalence, and negative relationships with self-awareness, cognitive stability, conscience, and optimal life components (Berzonsky, 2003). Therefore, it can be said that people with this identity style are unable to establish intimate emotional relationships, maintain and continue them (Kerpelman et al., 2012). Roshanaei (2022) in his study concluded that the normative identity style predicts the attitude towards infidelity, negatively. The results of the research of Qanbarikahiani et al., (2023) titled 'The effectiveness of acceptance and commitment (ACT) approach group training on the improvement of students' love' showed that the informational style of identity and commitment has a positive and significant relationship with explaining extramarital relationships.

With the increase in the number of divorces and taking into account its irreparable harms and damages, as well as taking into account the balanced functioning of the family and preventing its disintegration, knowing the effective factors in extramarital relationships, controlling and managing them as a strengthening foundation of family life, is one of the methods worthy of attention in solving couples' problems (Pananakhonsab, 2019). Therefore, considering the negative consequences of marital infidelity in destabilizing the foundation of the family, the present research will be conducted, considering the importance of examining the factors influencing the attitude toward extramarital relationships. As a result, the current research was conducted to investigate the structural pattern of loneliness and marital commitment with the attitude towards extramarital relationships with the mediation of identity styles.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The current research is of fundamental type in terms of its purpose and descriptive-correlation research in terms of nature and method. In the form of model finding of structural equations and using the path analysis technique, it investigated the theoretical model. The statistical population of the research

included all the married men and women of Ramsar City in (2022-2023), and 230 of them were selected through convenience sampling. Because according to Myers, Gamest, and Garino (2012), it is better to choose 20 samples for each subscale; therefore, the sample size was 180 people; however, in order to prevent the reduction of completed questionnaires, 230 people were selected as the research sample. The working method was such that after providing information related to the questionnaire's content, the principle of confidentiality and secrecy, the time required to answer the questions, and the purpose of the research, the questions were given to the volunteers who wanted to complete them. The criteria for entering the research included being married, not having a specific mental or physical problem that would prevent them from answering, having at least a diploma, being a volunteer, and having informed consent to answer the questions. The exit criteria included incomplete completion of the questionnaires and failure to respond to the instruments. SPSS-26 and AMOS-24 statistical software were used for data processing and analysis as well as research hypotheses. The bootstrap method was used in the Macro Preacher & Hayes (2008) program to analyze mediation relationships.

**1. Russell et al.'s Loneliness Scale (1980):** This questionnaire was prepared by Russell et al. in 1980 and translated by Bahirai et al. in 2006. It contains 20 items. During a study, Bahirai et al. (2006) calculated the reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 and its validity by correlating it with the depression scale of 0.67. The reliability of this test was reported as 0.89 by Russell et al. (2017) (Naderi & Haqshenas, 2009). Esmailpour Dilmaghani et al., (2022) also reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire of 0.78. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.88, which indicates adequate reliability.

**2. Adams and Jones's Marital Commitment Scale (1997):** This questionnaire was prepared and designed by Adams and Jones in 1997 and included 44 questions. This questionnaire is scored on a five-point Likert scale with three subtests under the title of commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and sense of commitment. It should be noted that this test has a reverse score. In 6 different studies, Adams and Jones obtained the reliability of each of the scales of this test as follows: personal commitment: 0.91, moral commitment: 0.89, and structural commitment: 0.86 (Abbasi Molid, 2009). In Iran, Shah Siahi et al. (2009) confirmed the validity of this questionnaire and reported its reliability based on Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

Cronbach's alpha of commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and forced commitment were 0.79, 0.82, and 0.84, respectively. In a preliminary study by Abbasi Molid (2009), the validity of this test has been confirmed. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total score was 0.95; therefore, the questionnaire has good reliability.

**3. Wheatley's scale of attitude towards extramarital relationships (2008):** This scale was prepared by Mark Wheatley in 2008 and translated by Alitabar et al. (2014). This scale has 12 statements, and each question is placed on a seven-point spectrum, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Wheatley (2008) obtained the reliability of this questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 and its validity of 0.78. In Iran, through the test-retest coefficient, the reliability of this scale was obtained as 0.80 (Alitabar et al., (2014). Cronbach's alpha was 0.84 among 383 single and married men and women living in the cities of Aliabad and Behshahr who were randomly selected (Abdollahzadeh, 2019). The test-retest coefficient obtained from the test implementation was also measured at 0.87 (Alitabar et al., 2014). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.83; therefore, the questionnaire has good reliability.

**4. Berzonsky's identity style scale (1989):** This questionnaire was created by Berzonsky (1989); and

was revised in 1992. This test has the reverse score. The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed by evaluating its correlation with Bennion & Adams (1986) identity status scale. Pittman (2012) reported the reliability coefficients of this test for information style 0.75, normative style 0.58, and diffuse-avoidant identity style 0.73. Berzonsky's (1997) internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) has reported an information scale of 0.70, a normative scale of 0.64, a diffuse-avoidant scale of 0.76, and an identity commitment of 0.71. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was obtained for information identity style (0.84), normative style (0.76), diffuse-avoidant identity styles (0.75), and commitment style (0.70); Therefore, the questionnaire has good reliability.

### 3. Results

A total of 230 married men and women from the city of Ramsar, with an average age of  $40/61 \pm 6.75$  years (average age of women  $40.47 \pm 5.51$  years and the average age of men  $40/71 \pm 7.55$  years), were studied in the age range of 27 to 54 years. Of these, 115 participants (50%) were men and 115 (50%) were women. The average duration of marriage was  $12.77 \pm 6.46$  years, ranging from 2 to 33 years. Descriptive indices of the variables in the present research, including mean and standard deviation, are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1. descriptive indicators (average & standard deviation) Research variables**

Variable	Mean	The standard deviation	maximum-minimum	Skewness	elongation
Loneliness	44/16	9/39	69-29	0/423	-0/462
Marital Commitment	142/97	11/85	179-117	0/522	1/053
Commitment to spouse	33/82	6/33	50-25	0/824	0/154
Commitment to marriage	39/39	4/91	49-30	-0/014	-0/745
A sense of commitment	69/66	10/38	96-43	0/171	0/242
Information identity style	40/76	5/37	55-18	-0/282	2/253
Normative identity style	32/55	4/40	42-16	-0/369	1/134
diffuse- avoidant identity style	27/45	4/71	41-16	0/060	0/193
Commitment identity style	38/90	5/48	50-26	-0/076	-0/617
toward extra-marital relationships	22/40	9/74	56-12	1/340	1/551

Table 2 shows information about the Pearson correlation between the research variables.

**Table 2. Correlation matrix between studied variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Loneliness	1								
2. Marital Commitment	-0/24**	1							
3. Commitment to spouse	0/14*	0/40**	1						
4. Commitment to marriage	-0/09	0/49**	0/30**	1					
5. A sense of commitment	-0/31**	0/67**	-0/31**	-0/10	1				
6. Information identity style	-0/37**	0/56**	0/11	0/25**	0/44**	1			
7. Normative identity style	-0/32**	0/47**	0/15*	0/18**	0/36**	0/64**	1		
8. diffuse-avoidant identity style	0/24**	-0/12	0/28**	0/11	-0/36**	-0/04	0/11	1	
9. Commitment identity style	-0/56**	0/39**	-0/11	0/07	0/48**	0/59**	0/61**	-0/37**	1
10. toward extra-marital relationships	0/20**	-0/50**	-0/28**	-0/29**	-0/25**	-0/49**	-0/49**	-0/02	-0/46**

Lack of significance: NS

\*\*P<,0/001 \*P<0/05



According to the results of the correlation matrix presented in Table 2, there was a significant and negative relationship between loneliness and information, normative, and commitment styles, and a significant and positive relationship between loneliness and diffuse-avoidant identity style and attitude towards extramarital relationships. Additionally, there was a significant and positive relationship between marital commitment and information, normative styles, and commitment style, and a significant and negative relationship between marital commitment and attitude towards extramarital relationships. A significant and negative relationship was observed between information, normative, and commitment identity styles and attitudes toward extramarital relationships. However, no significant relationship was observed between diffuse-avoidant identity style and attitude toward extramarital relationships. In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) with a path analysis approach was used to examine the fit of the relationship. Prior to applying this method, it is necessary to test the assumptions of this statistical approach. According to Kline's (2023) suggestion, univariate normality assumptions were confirmed using skewness and kurtosis estimation. Since the range of skewness and kurtosis for variables was within  $\pm 2$ , the univariate normality assumption was confirmed. To test the multivariate normality, standardized Mardia's skewness coefficient and the critical ratio were used. According to

Blunch's (2012) suggestion, values below 0.5 for the critical ratio were considered non-violation of multivariate normality assumptions. In this study, Maria's skewness coefficient was 2.524, and the critical ratio was 1.987, which is less than 5, indicating the establishment of multivariate normality assumptions. To investigate the presence of multivariate outliers, the Mahalanobis distance index was examined, and significance levels less than 0.05 indicated that the intended outliers were far away. Based on this index, three outliers were identified. Furthermore, the assumption of no multicollinearity was assessed by evaluating the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF). In this analysis, none of the calculated tolerance and VIF values for the research variables showed any deviation from the assumption of no multicollinearity. Therefore, the evaluation of statistical assumptions showed that structural equation modeling with a path analysis approach is an appropriate method for model fit evaluation, and the maximum likelihood method was used to estimate the parameters. Prior to structural coefficient analysis, the proposed model fit was investigated. As the results listed in Table 4 show, fit indices of PCFI=0/591, PNFI =0/592, CMIN/DF =2.389, RMSEA =0/077, IFI =0/978, CFI =0/970 and GFI=0/919 indicate a good fit of the proposed model with the data; therefore, the proposed model has a desirable fit. The fit indices of the structural model of the proposed research model are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** the fitness indicators of the suggested model of the current study

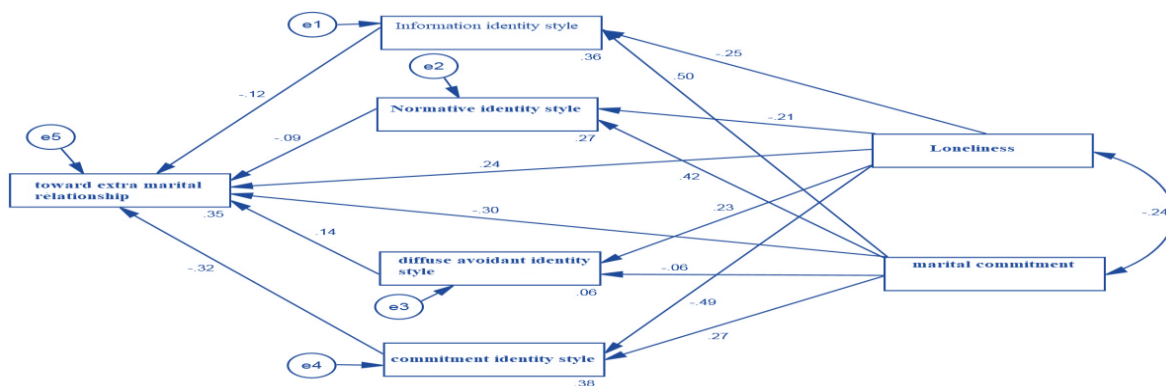
fitness indicators	$\chi^2$	df	p-value	RMIN/df	RMSEA	PNFI	CFI	PCFI	IFI	GFI
suggested model	14/334	6	<0/001	2/389	0/077	0/592	0/970	0/591	0/978	0/919

\*Acceptable level of indicators, PNFI, PCFI (>.5), CFI,GFI, IFI (>.9), RMSEA (<0.08), CMIN/DF (acceptable<5, good<3) (Kline,2016).

The R<sup>2</sup> index indicates the degree of explained variance of the endogenous latent variables. Chin (1998) describes R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 in structural equations as strong, moderate, and weak, respectively. The determination coefficient for the attitude towards

extramarital relationships variable is 0.352, indicating that all the exogenous and mediator variables, i.e., loneliness, marital commitment, and identity styles, can predict 0.235 percent of the changes in the attitude towards extramarital relationships, which is considered to be moderate.

Table 4 also shows the standardized path coefficients, and Figure 1 displays the proposed model.



**Figure 1.** Standardized coefficients of the proposed model for the effects of loneliness and marital commitment on the attitude towards extramarital relationships with the mediating role of identity styles

Therefore, based on the estimated indices, the results indicate that the structural relationship of loneliness and marital commitment with the attitude towards extramarital relationships, with the mediating role of

identity styles, is a good fit.

Referring to Table 4, it is possible to observe the standardized coefficients of all paths and critical values in the proposed model.

**Table 4. Standard coefficients of paths of the proposed model**

Direction	Standard coefficients	The standard error	critical ratio	significance level (p)
Loneliness-> toward extra-marital relationships	0/239	0/070	2/306	0/021
Marital commitment-> toward extra-marital relationships	-0/296	0/058	-4/138	<0/001
Loneliness-> information identity style	-0/246	0/031	-4/528	<0/001
Loneliness-> Normative identity style	-0/215	0/027	-3/692	<0/001
Loneliness-> diffuse-avoidant identity style	0/225	0/033	3/416	<0/001
Loneliness-> commitment identity style	-0/491	0/031	-9/154	<0/001
Marital commitment-> information identity style	0/496	0/025	9/133	<0/001
Marital commitment-> Normative identity style	0/425	0/022	7/308	<0/001
Marital commitment-> diffuse-avoidant identity style	-0/06	0/026	-0/908	0/364
Marital commitment->commitment identity style	0/271	0/025	5/06	<0/001
Information identity style-> toward extra-marital relationships	-0/123	0/119	-1/840	0/066
Normative identity style-> toward extra-marital relationships	-0/094	0/135	-1/508	0/132
diffuse-avoidant identity style-> toward extra-marital relationships	0/141	0/111	2/571	0/010
commitment identity style -> toward extra-marital relationships	-0/324	0/117	-4/813	<0/001

The results in Table 4 indicate that loneliness ( $p < 0/001$ ,  $\beta = 0.239$ ) and diffuse-avoidant identity style ( $p = 0/010$ ,  $\beta = 0.141$ ) have a significant and positive effect on attitude towards extramarital relationships. On the other hand, marital commitment ( $p < 0/001$ ,  $\beta = -0.296$ ) and commitment identity style ( $p < 0/001$ ,  $\beta = -0.324$ ) have a significant and negative effect on attitude towards extramarital relationships.

The existing proposed research model has 8 indirect or

Intermediary paths. The significance of the Intermediary relationship and the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through mediation were determined using the bootstrapping method. In Table 5, "boot" refers to the mean estimation of the indirect effect in bootstrap samples. Additionally, in this table, the standard error represents the standard deviation of the indirect estimations in bootstrap samples.

**Table 5. Bootstrap results for the indirect path of the proposed model**

Direction	Indirect effect	error	lower limit	upper line	probability value
Loneliness toward extra-marital relationships through informational identity style	0/031	0/022	0/001	0/071	0/045
Loneliness toward extra-marital relationships through Normative identity style	0/021	0/026	-0/016	0/067	0/307
Loneliness toward extra-marital relationships through diffuse-avoidant identity style	0/032	0/018	0/010	0/072	0/011
Loneliness toward extra-marital relationships through commitment identity style	0/162	0/056	0/076	0/259	0/002
Marital commitment to extra-marital relationships through informational identity style	-0/049	0/035	-0/116	-0/002	0/041
Marital commitment to extra-marital relationships through Normative identity style	-0/032	0/042	-0/105	0/031	0/412
Marital commitment to extra-marital relationships through diffuse-avoidant identity style	-0/007	0/008	-0/024	0/002	0/201
Marital commitment to extra-marital relationships through commitment identity style	-0/071	0/030	-0/129	-0/032	0/002

According to the findings in Table 5, the bootstrapping test results show that loneliness has an indirect effect on attitude towards extramarital relationships through information identity style ( $p = 0/045$ ,  $\beta = 0/031$ ), diffuse-avoidant identity style ( $p = 0/011$ ,  $\beta = 0/032$ ), and commitment identity style ( $p = 0/002$ ,  $\beta = 0/162$ ). Marital commitment has an indirect effect on attitude towards extramarital relationships through information identity style ( $p = 0/041$ ,  $\beta = -0/049$ ) and commitment identity style ( $p = 0/002$ ,  $\beta = -0/071$ ).

**4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study aimed to examine the structural model of loneliness and marital commitment with an

attitude towards extramarital relationships with the mediating role of identity styles in married men and women in Ramsar City. The results of data analysis showed that the structural model of loneliness and marital commitment with an attitude towards extramarital relationships with the mediating role of identity styles had a good fit.

Regarding the first assumption, i.e., the role of loneliness on Betrayal, statistical tests have shown that loneliness has a positive and significant effect on attitudes towards extramarital relationships. This hypothesis is in line with studies (Kaya & Şakiroğlu, 2023; Qanbarikahiani et al., 2023; Nazinejad & Rahmati, 2022).

In order to explain this role, it can be said that when both spouses and one of them feel lonely, they do not move towards interaction and communication with their spouse and also block all communication paths. As a result, their relationship is drawn towards infidelity (Larimi, 2019). Since the most important reason for people's inclination towards marriage and family formation is the satisfaction of emotional and sexual needs and overcoming loneliness, individuals try to overcome this unpleasant feeling by establishing an emotional-sexual relationship with the opposite sex and achieving inner peace. Therefore, when marriage not only does not reduce loneliness but increases it, it is natural for couples to try to distance themselves from this unpleasant feeling through an inclination toward extramarital relationships (Allen & Atkins, 2005). Thus, the presence of any negative emotions in couples that result from loneliness likely implies that in their marital relationship, they consider the presence of another person as emotional support inconspicuous and do not find their physical presence sufficient. Therefore, they try to compensate for the existing deficiencies in the relationship by connecting with someone other than their spouse.

Regarding the second assumption, the results of the statistical test indicated that marital commitment has a significant and negative effect on attitudes toward extramarital relationships. Marital commitment is an important factor in couples' attitudes toward marital relationships. This hypothesis is in line with studies (Tahanian et al., 2024; Shaker & Khademi, 2023; Maneesri, 2018; Yamaguchi et al., 2017; Kampowski, 2015). Therefore, extramarital relationships refer to establishing emotional and sexual relationships beyond committed relationships (Asadu & Egbuche, 2020). Marital commitment is the main factor in maintaining marital relationships by increasing intimate relationships between couples and cohesion between them, thus strengthening their peace and psychological security (Alizadehfard & Razaghi, 2021). On the other hand, the component of commitment in marital relations strengthens positive and productive emotions in couples in such a way that it strengthens emotional, verbal, and sexual communication and manifests a tangible feeling of satisfaction with life (Parsakia et al., 2023). It can be said that having it is contrary to treason. Therefore, since commitment implies the existence of beliefs and thoughts based on the continuity and maintenance of relationships, it strongly contributes to the stability of couples' relationships in such a way that the individual feels desirable and pleasant about the relationship's endurance without feeling trapped.

Regarding the third assumption and the mediating role

of identity styles in the relationship between loneliness and attitude towards betrayal, the bootstrap test results showed that information identity style, diffuse-avoidant identity style, and commitment identity style mediate the relationship between loneliness and attitudes towards extramarital relationships. Except for the normative identity style, all other identity styles, including the information, diffuse-avoidant, and commitment identity styles, mediate this relationship. Regarding the direct relationship of identity styles with loneliness, it can be said that identity styles have a direct relationship with loneliness. The findings of this research are consistent with the research of (Sanli, 2023; Kaniušonytė et al., 2019; Saghahi & Ranjbaran, 2017). In explaining the role of the three identity styles (information, diffuse-avoidant, and commitment) with loneliness, it can be said that individuals with an information identity style are more open to new experiences, such as making friends with people regarding the fourth or different cultures (Moghari et al., 2011). Individuals with a diffuse-avoidant identity style emotionally cope with coping and dealing with crises, and their parents have not adequately prepared them cognitively to enter social life (Berzonsky, 2008). These individuals have difficulties in establishing relationships with others and maintaining social networks; therefore, they will experience more loneliness, weakness, and disability (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005). Furthermore, the results indicated an inverse relationship between loneliness and a commitment-based identity style. According to the models proposed regarding loneliness, individuals who experience loneliness tend to enter into dialogue pathways with negative expectations and predictions, as well as a lack of necessary social skills, leading to failures in establishing and maintaining friendly and close relationships. These individuals are anxious and sensitive to being rejected (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). It seems that these factors explain how the increase in loneliness reduces the level of individual identity commitment and, conversely, why an individual who feels lonely is often deprived of having a popular and accessible role model or someone to feel closeness within their identity formation.

Regarding the fourth assumption and the mediating role of identity styles in the relationship between marital commitment and inclination towards extramarital relationships, the statistical test results showed that information and commitment identity styles mediate the relationship between marital commitment and attitude towards extramarital relationships. Regarding the direct relationship between marital commitment and identity styles, it can be said that marital commitment has a

positive and significant impact on information, normative, and commitment identity styles. The findings are consistent with the results of studies (Hazrati et al., 2018; Berzonsky, 2011; Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Regarding the explanation of the role of each identity style in marital commitment, it can be said that individuals with an information identity style establish stable rational relationships in their lives, have specific goals and beliefs, and less social instability in their social relationships, and feel more comfortable (Shokrollahzade & Madani, 2016). Individuals with an active commitment identity style try to make the right decisions and choices in important matters and feel committed to them. According to Berzonsky (2003), individuals with a normative identity style also have a strong commitment to their lives because they seek help and advice from prominent individuals when faced with life issues and adhere to standards (Sohrabi, 2015). Therefore, since individuals enter into married life with unique identity styles, their lives will be influenced by these styles.

Generally, the research findings have shown how loneliness, marital commitment, and identity styles predict extramarital relationships. This study, like other conducted studies, had certain limitations. For example, this study was based on a clinical sample and self-report questionnaires. Since the data was not based on interviews, it seems that the results of this study may not be generalizable to clinical samples. Additionally, since this study had four variables and required participants to complete four questionnaires, it is possible that some participants did not answer all questionnaire items due to the length of questions and required focus. Furthermore, this study was conducted on married women and men in Ramsar City. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other groups, such as married women and men in other cities, regions, and subcultures. To increase the generalizability and replicability of the results of this study, it is suggested that this study be replicated on larger samples and in diverse communities and cultures. It is also recommended that future studies be conducted on gender differentiation in a comparative manner.

## 5. Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles were adhered to in this research. Participants were informed about the research objectives. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their information and had the right to continue or withdraw from the study.

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### Authors' contributions

All authors contributed in designing, executing, and writing of all sections of this research.

### Conflicts of interest

According to the authors, there is no conflict of interest in this article.

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