


The Compassionate Type?


Personality, Self-Compassion, and Post-Divorce Adjustment among Iranian Women

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Author Note

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Abstract

Objective: This study examined whether the association between the Big Five personality dimensions and post-divorce adjustment (PDA) was mediated by Neff's concept of self-compassion.

Background: Research on marital psychology suggests that multiple psychological factors are associated with PDA. However, the mechanisms by which these factors affect PDA have received much less attention. Accordingly, in the current study, the potential mediation effect of Self-Compassion was investigated. Cultural context of PDA is considered.

Method: A total of 334 divorced Iranian women took part in the study. Participants completed a sociodemographic survey, including the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), the Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (SCS-SF), and Fisher's Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS).

Results: Correlational analyses and structural equation modeling showed a significant positive association of self-compassion with self-reported measures of the positive factors of PDA (feeling of self-worth, disentanglement from love relationships, social self-worth, and rebuilding social trust), and the personality traits of Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness. There also was a significant negative association with the negative factors of PDA (symptoms of grief and feeling of self-anger) and the personality traits of Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience. Self-compassion significantly predicted variation in positive psychological health beyond that attributable to personality; it partially mediated the relationship between personality and post-divorce adjustment.

Conclusions: Personality appears to relate to post-divorce adjustment through self-compassion. The role of Iranian cultural characteristics in perceiving the magnitude

of stress resulting from divorce, and post-divorce adjustment is discussed.

Implications: Enhancing self-compassion among divorced Iranian women seems to be a worthwhile approach to divorce counselling.

Keywords: emotional stability; extraversion; conscientiousness; agreeableness; openness to experience; self-compassion; post-divorce adjustment.

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Divorce is one of the more traumatic life experiences in adulthood and typically requires major adjustment (Davarinejad et al., 2021; Davarinejad et al., 2017). Divorce rates are growing in non-Western societies, such as Iran (Yahyazadeh & Khedri, 2015). There, in 2020, for every 100 registered marriages, 32.9 divorces occurred, rising from 176,827 to 183,193 cases in one year, an increase of 3.6 percent (Iranopendata, 2021)¹. Dargahi et al. (2019) confirm that there is a relationship between unemployment, inflation, and divorce rate. The study concludes that higher education and employment of women *seem to be a potent safeguard against* divorce, suggesting that the employment of educated women in Iran has created stable families by reducing economic hardship. At the same time, divorce rates are higher in urban areas (Tehran), even though unemployment is below average there. In summary, the recorded increase in divorce rates in Iran seems to be owed to a complex interplay of economic circumstances (increasing economic hardship) and cultural, indigenous, and religious traditions around marriage and divorce that make it impossible to easily explain the relationship between divorce and economic, socio-structural indicators.

For many divorced individuals, in Iran and elsewhere, having divorced means struggling with financial burdens, losing social support, and enduring compulsory moves because of divorce (Ahmadi et al., 2018; Asanjarani, Jazayeri, et al., 2017).

¹ The calculations and the subsequent elaborations on possible reasons for increasing divorce rates in Iran draw heavily on an article published on the IRANOPEPENDATE website: <https://iranopendata.org/en/pages/the-dramatic-increase-of-divorce-rates-in-iran-nearly-one-in-three-marriages-lead-to-divorce#:~:text=While%20the%20number%20of%20marriages,registered%20marriages%2C%2032.9%20divorces%20occurred>

Studies have shown wide-ranging differences in how well divorced persons manage divorce-related pressure based on a variety of circumstances (Boss et al., 2016; Davarinejad et al., 2021).

As will be shown, associations with post-divorce adjustment (PDA) are inconsistent across studies. Cultural variation across samples could contribute to unique associations. Furthermore, constructs found to predict PDA, such as personality characteristics, could be better explained through investigating mediation effects of other constructs arguably more proximal to PDA, such as self-compassion. The purpose of the current study is to simultaneously investigate the role of personality and of self-compassion in PDA among Iranian women.

Post-Divorce Adjustment

Post-divorce adjustment has been attended to by researchers for quite some time; the concept designates what ordinary people experience after formal divorce (Fisher, 1977). One of the most influential theories of PDA conceptualizes it as consisting of several dimensions: (1) feeling of self-worth (FSW) refers to changes that happen in self-image and feelings about valuations of the self; (2) disentanglement from the love relationship (DLR) is the possible emotional attachment alongside possible feelings of love toward the ex-spouse; (3) social self-worth (SSW) deals with the tendency to share one's experiences with others, and establishing new social connections; (4) rebuilding social trust (RST) addresses the tendency to date and engage in sexual activity in new relationships; (5) symptoms of grief (SOG) includes negative emotional expression (loneliness, depression, fear, crying, insecurity) or physical distress (sleeping and eating dysfunctions, exhaustion); (6) feeling of self-anger (FSA) includes feeling shame or guilt toward

oneself or toward the ex-spouse (Fisher, 1977; Fisher & Alberti, 2016). The latter two dimensions we designate as divorce maladjustment (DMA).

Individuals differ in their PDA outcomes. PDA appears to be aided by good health, advanced education, and sufficient monetary assets (Fisher & Alberti, 2016). Women especially tend to be at higher risk for poor PDA because of threats to their earning potential (Amato & Previti, 2003; Bowen & Jensen, 2017). However, some studies have failed to show a connection between financial stability and PDA (Yárnoz-Yaben, 2009). Studies have also produced inconsistent findings on whether the number of children, the duration of marital life, the duration of divorced years, and work status of divorced women associate with PDA). Certain factors could be more relevant to the given circumstances and cultural settings.

Extensive research with Iranian samples has shown that gender, socio-cultural status, and employment status often correlate with post-divorce adjustment (Asanjarani, Galehdarpour, et al., 2017; Davarinejad et al., 2021; Yahyazadeh & Khedri, 2015; Zare et al., 2017). Applying Schwartz's culture-level value theory (Schwartz, 2017), the values of embeddedness (collectivist orientation) and hierarchy in Iranian culture (Delkhamoush, 2005, 2009, 2014) may be seen as favoring marriage and marital stability, especially for women. In Iranian culture, preserving a marriage (even when dissatisfying) is a durable social norm. Divorce is viewed as shameful. Divorced women tend to face economic and social-cultural pressure and stigma. Citing from Pirak et al. (2019), one can identify four main aspects, namely "identity threat (stigma, becoming a sex object, discrimination), loss of independence (economic dependence, lack of independence in choosing a place to live, being controlled), vague future (concerns about children's future, little chance of having an appropriate remarriage, fear of loneliness), and the absence of the

husband and his role (emotional and sexual needs, children's need for their father, need for a supporter and security)" (p. 75). In contrast, men can get remarried quickly, and tend to prefer a new bride with no sexual experience. Furthermore, many divorced women need to provide for themselves but as women they do face barriers toward finding employment (Barikani et al., 2012). In short, cultural factors specific to Iran are likely to add strain to the PDA process that women from Western cultures find less common.

Personality and Post-Divorce Adjustment

Personality characteristics may influence interpersonal difference in PDA. The classic "Big Five" personality dimensions (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & John, 1992) represent a variety of characteristics that help differentiate individuals. The characteristics include Extraversion (high sociability and assertiveness, energized by social situations; (Laney, 2002), Agreeableness (kind, generous, trusting and trustworthy, helpful, and eager to share their interests with others; (Barrick & Mount, 1991), Conscientiousness (self-discipline, act respectfully, and conforming to outside expectations; control, regulate, and direct their desires; (Toegel & Barsoux, 2012), Neuroticism (inclination to feel negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, or depression; occasionally named "emotional instability," or as the opposite of "emotional stability;" (Jeronimus et al., 2014), and Openness to Experience (appreciation of art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination, curiosity, and diversity of experience; eager to attempt new things; (Ambridge, 2014; McCrae & John, 1992).

Previous research suggests that personality characteristics contribute to PDA. One study discovered that better PDA was associated with Dominance, Assertiveness, Self-Assurance, Intelligence, Creativity, Imagination, Social Boldness,

Liberalism, and Self-Sufficiency (Thomas, 1982). More recently, a study of Iranian women indicated that higher levels of Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness were significantly associated with indicators of a more positive PDA (Davarinejad et al., 2021). A study by Amani et al. (2019) claims that success or failure of the marriages of Iranian women can be predicted based on their levels of Neuroticism and Openness to Experience.

Mowrer (1932), one of the first researchers to study post-divorce adjustment, argued that post-divorce adjustment and personality traits are contingent on cultural traits within a society. Thus, how personality influences PDA could vary by larger social influences and cultural contexts. Furthermore, personality may be a relatively distal predictor of PDA that shapes other processes more proximal to PDA that make a bigger difference for navigating post-divorce life, all occurring within a cultural context that influences psychological adjustment (Boss et al., 2016).

Self-Compassion

Besides personality, people may have other dispositions or habits that shape PDA, such as self-compassion. Self-compassion means that you are kind and understanding vis-à-vis yourself when confronted with personal failings (Bluth & Neff, 2018; Neff et al., 2019). Neff (2003) indicated that self-compassion consists of three central components: self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity (viewing failure as universal and expected) versus isolation (viewing failure as more personal), and mindfulness (openness toward own thoughts and feelings) versus over-identification (overstating or overly focused on negativity).

Studies show that self-compassionate individuals are psychologically healthier than those who have less self-compassion. For instance, self-compassion is positively related with life satisfaction, wisdom, happiness, optimism, curiosity,

learning goals, social connectedness, personal responsibility, and emotional resilience; it is negatively associated with self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination, thought suppression, perfectionism, and disordered eating attitudes (Adams & Leary, 2007; Neff & McGehee, 2010). Accordingly, self-compassion should facilitate PDA which tends to incorporate aspects of life satisfaction, happiness, optimism (both for oneself and for others), emotional resilience, and social bonding (Quinney & Fouts, 2004; Yárnnoz et al., 2008). Indeed, higher levels of self-compassion were connected with less divorce-related emotional intrusion into everyday life (Sbarra et al., 2012) and more positive adjustment for individuals who blame themselves for a romantic breakup (Zhang & Chen, 2017). Self-compassion appears to be an emotional regulation strategy to address negative feelings with kindness and even replace them with positive feelings in the sense of shared common humanity (Wei et al., 2011). It can thus be assumed that self-compassion would aid individuals adjusting to the challenges of divorce, in particular individuals prone to face high levels of external (and possibly internalized) negativity due to divorce, such as Iranian women (Zare et al., 2017). Keshavarz Mohammadi and Khalatbari (2018) report a quasi-experimental study showing that self-compassion training is an efficient method to increase distress tolerance and emotion regulation and decrease anxiety in divorced women.

Certain personality characteristics could be more conducive to self-compassion. Research has indicated that less Neuroticism (Saricaoglu & Arslan, 2013) and greater Agreeableness, Openness to experiences, and Conscientious are associated with self-compassion (Bülbül & Arslan, 2017). People suffering from personality disorders have been helped to become more self-accepting and less symptomatic by promoting self-compassion (Feliu-Soler et al., 2017; Krawitz, 2012).

As components of self-compassion, self-kindness and mindfulness have been shown to moderate the association between autonomy and depression as well as between self-criticism and depression. The common humanity component can also moderate the association between self-criticism and depression (Wong & Mak, 2013). Hence, self-compassion could be a key construct that—in combination with other dispositions—influences negative psychological outcomes. Studies suggest that women in particular struggle with generating self-compassion (Yarnell et al., 2015).

Current Study

The current study sets out to better understand the psychological mechanisms underlying PDA in a non-Western cultural context, namely among Iranian women. Women were purposively chosen for the study as its target group, because—in Western discourse in particular—women are often characterized as an oppressed segment of the population, reason enough to put them in focus of empirical research on post-divorce adjustment. Accounting for both personality and self-compassion is expected to explain more variance in PDA than mere personality traits and to offer additional insight into why personality affects PDA. Results may, thus, help focus efforts to reduce distresses after divorce. The following research questions guided our analyses: First, to what extent is personality related to each distinct dimension of PDA (FSW, DLR, SSW, RST, SOG, and FSA)? Second, to what extent are self-compassion elements related to each distinct dimension of PDA? Third, to what extent do personality traits and self-compassion dimensions uniquely predict the distinct dimensions of PDA? Fourth, to what extent does self-compassion mediate associations between personality traits and PDA?

Method

Participants

The researchers approached divorced women from Kermanshah, Iran via (1) handouts placed at a community center for divorced and widowed women (Behzisti), and (2) via faculty members from two local universities inviting students to invite divorced acquaintances or family members to participate. Participants should have been divorced for at least six months from a marriage that persisted at least six months and should not be receiving therapeutic interventions at the time. The six-month period was enacted among others to avoid the inclusion of women; whose divorce was not yet legally irreversible according to Iranian law. Qualified members were telephoned and invited to an orientation meeting. At the meeting, the goal of the study was repeated, agreement forms were signed, and questionnaires were distributed. Completed questionnaires were to be returned at a meeting five days later. Participants were not paid for their contribution. The ethics committee of the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch (IAU; Tehran, Iran) confirmed the research methods were in line with the rules put in the seventh and current edition (2013) of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Out of 400 questionnaires distributed between March and August 2018, 354 were returned (a response rate of 88%). Of the returned questionnaires, 20 had to be eliminated because they did not meet the inclusion criteria, resulting in a final sample of 334 divorced women. Since our sample is a non-probability sample of volunteers, study results are of limited generalizability. Considering this, the study is more so an exploratory endeavor than that it is testing conceptual propositions. Table 1 documents sample characteristics.

(Table 1 about here)

Measures

Participants reported their age, educational attainment, length of marriage, months since they divorced, number of children, marriage style (arranged vs. love-based), and job status (homemaker vs. employed). Dummy variables were created for the dichotomous variables.

Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS)

Participants completed Fisher's Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS; (Fisher, 1977). Asanjarani et al (2017) translated the questionnaire into the Farsi/Persian version with satisfactory psychometric properties (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.93$). The altogether 100 items have response options on 5-point scales with the anchor points 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always), with higher scores reflecting a better adjustment with divorce. The instrument assesses six dimensions of post-divorce adjustment: (1) feeling of self-worth (FSW); ($\alpha = 0.82$)—the higher the score, the less negative attitude toward herself and more acceptance of herself as a unique person; (2) disentanglement from love relationship (DLR); ($\alpha = 0.86$)—the higher the score, the more cognitively and emotionally detached she was from her ex-spouse; (3) social self-worth (SSW); ($\alpha = 0.70$)—the higher the score, the less she experienced biased social interactions, social rejection, or deprivations; (4) rebuilding social trust (RST); ($\alpha = 0.86$)—the higher the score, the more she was able to trust others for creating a close relationships; (5) symptoms of grief (SOG); ($\alpha = 0.89$)—the higher the score, the more she displayed symptoms and signs of grief and depression; (6) feeling of self-anger (FSA); ($\alpha = 0.89$)—the higher the score, the more she experienced feeling of revenge and anger toward her ex-spouse, and feelings of guilt toward herself.

Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (SCS-SF)

The 12-item Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS–SF; (Raes et al., 2011) was translated into the Farsi/Persian version with satisfactory psychometric properties (Cronbach’s $\alpha > 0.84$; Ghorbani et al (2012). Participants are expected to rate how often (ranging from 1 “almost never” to 5, “almost always”) they behave in the manner indicated by each of the items. A sample item is, “I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain.” The SCS-SF consists of six subscales: Self-Kindness (two items), Self-Judgment (two items), Common Humanity (two items), Isolation (two items), Mindfulness (two items), and Over-Identification (two items). In the current study, the total score of the SCS was used in the CFA and SEM analysis. Higher scores indicate a higher level of self-compassion. Cronbach’s α was .88.

Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

Participants completed the Ten-item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003). Atari et al. (2017) translated the inventory into Farsi/Persian. The TIPI is a self-rating inventory assessing Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience. Answers are given on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly), with higher scores reflecting higher levels of the assessed dimension. Five items of the TIPI were reverse scored, and then composite scores for each personality feature were calculated by averaging participant responses to the appropriate items (Atari, 2015). The short-term test-retest reliability of TIPI was reported as $r = .77, .71, .76, .70, .62$, respectively for the dimensions of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience (Gosling et al., 2003). The Persian TIPI demonstrated adequate convergent validity and test-retest reliability (Atari, 2015).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The nominal level of statistical significance was set as $p < .05$. Statistical analyses were performed with SPSS and AMOS 25.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA). Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the Big Five, Self-Compassion indicators, and PDA indicators. The study used the maximum likelihood estimation method, which requires the assumption of normality, to test the models. The multivariate normality test was used to examine whether the data in the present study fulfilled the normality assumption. The result of the multivariate normality test showed that the data were not multivariate normally distributed. As a consequence, the scaled χ^2 -statistic developed by Satorra and Bentler (1988) was used to adjust for possible impacts of non-normality on the final results.

(Table 2 about here)

Higher scores of Emotional Stability were associated with positive indicators of self-compassion, and higher levels of four positive PDA domains (FSW, DLR, SSW, and RST), alongside lower levels of two negative PDA domains (SOG and FSA), designated as divorce maladjustment (DMA). Higher scores of Extraversion were associated with positive indicators of Self-Compassion and higher levels of three divorce adjustment domains (FSW, DLR, and RST), alongside lower levels of DMA (SOG and FSA). Higher scores of Agreeableness were associated with lower levels of the Common Humanity element of Self-Compassion and one positive indicator of PDA (DLR). Higher scores of Openness to Experience were associated with higher levels of two negative components of Self-Compassion (isolation and over-identification) and DLR. Higher scores of Conscientiousness were associated

with higher levels of two indicators of Self-Compassion (Self-Kindness and Common Humanity), higher levels of two positive indicators of PDA (FSW and SSW), and lower levels of one DMA indicator (SOG) (see Table 2).

Several Self-Compassion components were correlated with indicators of PDA. Higher scores of Self-Kindness were associated with higher levels of FSW and lower levels of SOG and FSA. Higher scores of Self-Judgement were associated with lower levels of FSW, DLR, RST, and higher levels of SOG, FSA. Higher scores of Common Humanity were associated with higher levels of FSW, RST. Higher scores of Isolation were associated with lower levels of FSW, DLR, SSW, RST, and higher levels of SOG, FSA. Higher scores of Mindfulness were associated with higher levels of FSW, DLR, RST, and lower levels of SOG, FSA. Higher scores of Over-Identification were associated with lower levels of FSW, DLR, SSW, RST, and higher levels of SOG, FSA (see Table 2).

Measurement Models

Scholars have recommended performing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to secure that measurement models offer a satisfactory fit to the data (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Meyers et al., 2016). Once a satisfactory measurement model is established, a structural model can be analyzed (Wei et al., 2011). Mediation can be tested by comparing a hypothesized partly mediated structural model with an entirely mediated structural model via maximum probability (Meyers et al., 2016). Meyers et al. strongly recommended a cut-off value of .95 and greater for Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), in combination with cut-off value .08 and less for standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) and root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) to evaluate model fit.

One of the statistical presuppositions needed for the presence of a mediated relation is that the predictor variable significantly correlates with the potential mediator variable and the outcome variable are significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Meyers et al., 2016). The results of our regression analyses showed that Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Openness to Experience significantly predicted Self-Compassion. However, the regression analysis that included Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience as predictors of DMA was not significant. As a result, the Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience variables were removed from the measurement models and structural models.

The result for the measurement model [composing Emotional Stability, Extraversion, total Self-Compassion, DMA including Symptoms of Grief (SOG) and Feeling of Self-Anger (FSA) as its indicators] resulted in a good fit to the data, $\chi^2/df = 3.070$, CFI = .99, NFI = .99, GFI = .99, IFI = .98, TLI = .98, RMSEA = 0.047, SRMR = .009. The loadings of the measured manifest variables on the latent DMA variable were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. This implied that DMA was adequately measured by its respective indicators. Furthermore, correlations between two independent variables (i.e., Emotional Stability, Extraversion), one mediator variable (i.e., Self-Compassion), and one dependent variable (i.e., Divorce Maladjustment) were all statistically significant ($p < .001$) (see Table 3).

(Table 3 about here)

Structural Models

Only measures reaching a satisfactory level of reliability were used for configuring a structural model. Variables were arranged so that DMA would be the outcome variables, Emotional Stability and Extraversion would be the predictor

variables, and self-compassion would be the—potentially—mediating variable. Maximum probability was employed as the estimation method. SEM analyses via CFA and path analyses were used to test a “causal model” between predictor (and mediators) variables and the dependent variable.

The model yielded a good fit to the data (Figure 1). Although the χ^2 value was statistically significant, the GFI, CFI, NFI, IFI, and TLI were .996, .998, .995, .998, and .990 respectively, and the SRMR and RMSEA were .007 and 0.040 [90% CI (0.000 - 0.123)], respectively. Figure 1 presents the standardized coefficients and squared multiple correlations associated with the model.

(Figure 1 about here)

The paths from Emotional Stability to Self-Compassion (standardized path coefficient $\beta = .530$, unstandardized path coefficient $b = 0.160$ with a standard error of $SE = 0.014$, $p = .0001$), from Extraversion to Self-Compassion ($\beta = .217$, $b = 0.063$ with $SE = 0.013$, $p = .0001$), from Emotional Stability to DMA ($\beta = -.362$, $b = -0.121$ with $SE = 0.017$, $p = .0001$), from Extraversion to DMA ($\beta = -.125$, $b = -0.040$ with $SE = 0.014$, $p = .004$), and from Self-Compassion to DMA ($\beta = -.472$, $b = -0.524$ with $SE = 0.058$, $p = .0001$), were all statistically significant. Approximately 58% and 33% of the variance of Divorce Maladjustment and of Self-Compassion were explained by the model configuration. The Aroian test (Aroian, 1947), a member of the Sobel test (Sobel, 1986) family, was used to evaluate the statistical significance of the indirect effect, and it showed that both the indirect effect of Emotional Stability through Self-Compassion to DMA ($z = -7.070$, $p = .0001$) and the indirect effect of Extraversion through Self-Compassion to DMA ($z = -4.240$, $p = .0001$), were statistically significant.

With all of the paths being statistically significant, the possibility of having obtained a partial mediation effect for two predictor variables was raised. In the unmediated model for Emotional Stability, the direct path between Emotional Stability and Divorce Mal-Adjustment (DMA) was statistically significant ($\beta = -.602$, $b = -0.210$, with $SE = 0.017$, $p = .0001$), and a Freedman–Schatzkin test (Freedman & Schatzkin, 1992) comparing the two coefficients verified that the direct path coefficient in the unmediated model was significantly greater than the corresponding coefficient in the mediated model, $t(332) = -25.605$, $p < .001$. In summary, taken in isolation, greater levels of Emotional Stability predict lower levels of DMA. When Self-Compassion is considered, it appears that the effect of Emotional Stability on DMA is partially mediated by Self-Compassion. Specifically, higher levels of Emotional Stability were associated with higher levels of Self-Compassion that in turn were associated with lower levels of DMA. Based on the ratio of the strength of the standardized indirect effect to the strength of the unmediated standardized effect ($-.250/-602$), we may conclude that about 42% of the isolated direct effect of Emotional Stability on DMA is mediated through Self-Compassion.

In the unmediated model for Extraversion, the direct path between Extraversion and Divorce Mal-Adjustment (DMA) was statistically significant ($\beta = -.233$, $b = -0.078$, with $SE = 0.019$, $p = .0001$), and a Freedman–Schatzkin (1992) test comparing the two coefficients corroborated that the direct path coefficient in the unmediated model was significantly greater than the corresponding coefficient in the mediated model, $t(332) = -17.595$, $p < .001$. In summary, taken in isolation, greater levels of Extraversion predict lower levels of DMA. However, when Self-Compassion is considered, it appears that the effect of Extraversion on DMA is partially mediated by Self-Compassion. Specifically, higher levels of Extraversion were associated with

higher levels of Self-Compassion that in turn were associated with lower levels of DMA. Based on the ratio of the strength of the standardized indirect effect to the strength of the unmediated standardized effect ($-.102/-.233$), we may conclude that about 44% of the isolated direct effect of Extraversion on DMA is mediated through Self-Compassion.

Discussion

Study results indicated that personality was indeed associated with post-divorce adjustment among divorced Iranian women living in Iran. However, no single personality trait was associated with each and every dimension of PDA, suggesting the value of using multi-faceted PDA measures in understanding potential associations. Emotional Stability and Extraversion seemed especially relevant to PDA, followed by Conscientiousness. This finding replicates those from a similar study with a different sample of Iranian women (Davarinejad et al., 2021). Emotional stability (aka low neuroticism) seems to help buffer any negative effects of divorce through more positive and empowering feelings and thoughts (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021; Naismith et al., 2019); Extraversion is likely to provide confidence in one's ability to be open and confident in the face of a cultural backlash against divorce (which one is likely to experience in Iran). Conscientiousness contributes to discipline and structure that promotes adapting to new circumstances. Agreeableness seems to be less relevant to the PDA dimensions because of its prime relevance to social relationships. Perhaps agreeable individuals experience benefits (e.g., more social support) and challenges (e.g., dissonance by not conforming to cultural marriage standards in Iran) for PDA, cancelling each other out. Openness to Experience seems to assist with adjusting to the new experience of divorce. However, as conceptualized and measured, that dimension may represent a

different kind of openness, more toward art and creativity than in an interpersonal understanding.

Similarly, and consistent with other research (Bülbül & Arslan, 2017), personality, especially Emotional Stability and Extraversion, was associated with indicators of Self-Compassion. Likewise, positive feelings and thoughts, along with assertiveness and fewer worries about conforming to social expectations (Roccatto et al., 2013), logically facilitate a more positive perspective toward one's own self. As expected, indicators of self-compassion also correlated with dimensions of PDA in most cases. Whereas previous research on such associations found self-compassion to correspond with emotional elements of PDA (Sbarra et al., 2012), the current study suggests that self-compassion pertains to a variety of PDA elements simultaneously. An assumption for the current study was that personality would be relevant to both PDA and Self-Compassion, and that Self-Compassion could be a means toward explaining at least some of the association between personality and PDA. The intercorrelations among the variables were consistent with such an assumption.

The outcome of the current study does suggest that Self-Compassion is a significant mediator between personality and PDA, though particularly for Emotional Stability and Extroversion, and only for a narrower measure of PDA (reconceptualized as divorce maladjustment—DMA). This provides some support for the direct and indirect role of personality on PDA with Self-Compassion being a relevant bridge between concepts. Hence, divorced women who are emotionally stable (i.e., low levels of Neuroticism) or extrovert might find it easier to generate Self-Compassion that in turn facilitates PDA. More specifically, such women appear to be kinder to themselves (self-kindness instead of self-criticism), more able to see

that their negative experiences occur to others as well (Common Humanity instead of Isolation), and do not feel overwhelmed by their painful thoughts and feelings (mindfulness instead of over-identification). Given that Self-Compassion only partially mediated associations between personality and PDA (especially regarding Emotional Stability), there may very well be other mediating variables that help explain how personality facilitates PDA. Further research that incorporates Self-Compassion along with other attitudes, perceptions, and behavior can expand on the understanding of links between personality and PDA.

Limitations

Several considerations limit the overall generalizability to this study. We relied on self-reports for data collection, which could produce data that diverges from observational research in which the behaviors of Self-Compassion are perceived in a clinical setting. The outcome of structural equation models (SEM) remains correlational in nature and do not prove causal relationships among the variables. While expanding the literature to non-Western cultures, this study pertains most to women in the context of the Iranian society, wherein high prominence is placed on maintaining a marriage. Needless to say, the causal interrelation between personality characteristics, self-compassion, and post-divorce adjustment can validly only be assessed in prospective longitudinal studies with participants being sampled and studied before marriage, during marriage, and after divorce, as is possible using data from the German Socioeconomic Panel (van Scheppingen & Leopold, 2020). However, such studies typically lack an assessment of self-compassion.

Future Research Directions

Other probable directions for forthcoming, related studies could follow an experimental design to study whether inducing Self-Compassion can enhance Post-

Divorce Adjustment (PDA) among divorced women or for that matter men. It can also be useful that future studies examine the effectiveness of Self-Compassion training protocols on PDA. Studies that focus on couples dyadically can focus on how differences in personality between spouses contribute to post-divorce processes and PDA.

Implications

Clearly, our results inform practitioners who assist divorced women in Iran: Counselors and psychotherapists can choose interventions conducive to Self-Compassion (e.g., self-soothing) that are contrary to persons' familiar patterns. Such patterns will often arise from socialization experience in the family of upbringing and are heftily influenced by the general cultural climate in Iran. Clients with higher levels of Neuroticism who see themselves negatively—in line with learned cultural norms—might then focus more on outer signs to ensure adequate care from others, instead of employing their inner capacity for self-care. Fostering Self-Compassion among divorced Iranian women may pave the way towards a healthy recovery from post-divorce stress in spite of—relatively stable, sometimes unfavorable—personality traits and—overly tight—cultural norms.

Disclosures

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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Table 1
Descriptive Statistical Overview of Sociodemographic Information

Variable	Statistics			
	M	SD	<i>n</i>	%
Age (years)	32.95	7.16		
Length of marriage (years)	6.47	5.23		
Length of time since divorce (years)	2.43	1.15		
Number of Children				
0			132	39.52
1			153	45.80
2			34	10.17
3			15	4.49
Marriage Style				
Arranged			209	62.57
Love-based			125	37.43
Job Status				
Housewife			164	49.10
Employed			170	50.90
Education				
Primary/Guidance school			25	7.50
High School Leaving Certificate			117	35.00
Bachelor			163	48.80
Master/Doctoral degree			29	8.70

Note: N = 334

Table 2*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of all Psychological Variables*

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Emotional Stability	4.23	1.57	-																
2. Extraversion	4.33	1.65	.02	-															
3. Agreeableness	4.59	1.21	.08	-.27**	-														
4. Openness to Experience	4.73	1.12	-.03	.31**	-.01	-													
5. Conscientiousness	5.77	1.03	.27**	.13*	.09	-.04	-												
6. Self-Kindness (SK)	3.36	0.83	.20**	.13*	-.01	.08	.21**	-											
7. Self-Judgment (SJ)	3.03	0.83	.04	-.12*	.05	.03	.08	-.14**	-										
8. Common Humanity (CH)	3.20	0.85	.18**	.13*	-.22**	-.02	.10	.27**	-.24**	-									
9. Isolation (I)	2.79	0.92	-.36**	.06	-.09	.18**	-.06	-.10	.27**	.05	-								
10. Mindfulness (M)	3.41	0.82	.53**	.18**	-.07	-.10	.32**	.35**	-.06	.33**	-.21**	-							
11. Over identification (OI)	3.01	0.98	-.42**	-.13*	-.03	.16**	.03	.04	.51**	-.13**	.70**	-.33**	-						
12. Feeling of Self-Worth (FSW)	2.64	0.41	.38**	.41**	-.08	-.07	.32**	.46**	-.11*	.28**	-.36**	.51**	-.44**	-					
13. Disentanglement (DLR)	2.61	0.35	.31**	.30**	-.12*	.27**	.06	.11	-.28**	.05	-.23**	.17**	-.23**	.37**	-				
14. Social Self-Worth (SSW)	2.95	0.37	.16**	-.05	.04	.02	.13**	.10	-.05	.03	-.37**	-.04	.25**	.21**	-.09	-			
15. Rebuilding Self-Trust (RST)	3.10	0.51	.15**	.31**	.07	.04	.06	.01	-.35**	.16**	-.41**	.19**	-.59**	.38**	.36**	-.08	-		
16. Symptoms of Grief (SOG)	2.39	0.58	-.57**	-.22**	.03	.07	-.26**	-.14**	.32**	-.08	.49**	-.36**	.59**	.65**	.61**	-.13*	.55**	-	
17. Feeling of Self-Anger (FSA)	2.93	0.55	-.43**	-.17**	.02	.03	-.10	-.19**	.32**	.06	.44**	-.30**	.54**	.48**	.43**	-.06	.58**	.68**	-

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

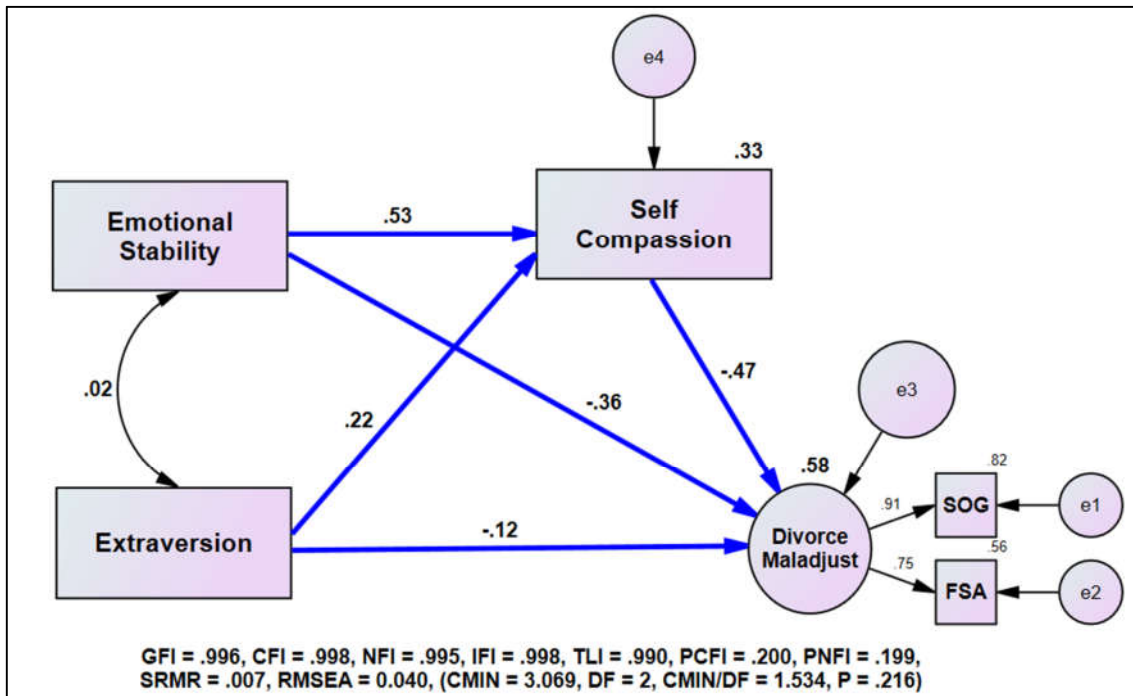
Table 3***Correlations among Variables in the Measurement Model***

Latent Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional Stability	—			
2. Extraversion	.02	—		
3. Self-Compassion (SC)	.34**	.13**	—	
4. Divorce Maladjustment (DMA)	-.55**	-.21**	-.61**	—

**** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05**

Figure 1

Standardized coefficients and squared multiple correlations for the structural model of DMA



Note. SOG = Symptoms of Grief, FSA = Feeling of Self-Anger