

# Predicting Marital Stability Among Divorcing Couples in Ilam Based on Social Networks in Marital Relationships

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to explain the relationship between social networks in marital relationships and ADHD with marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam.

**Methods and Materials:** The research is applied in terms of purpose and employs a descriptive-correlational method. The statistical population of this study includes all divorcing couples in Ilam who visited family courts, counseling centers, and divorce registration offices during 2019-2020. The sampling method used in this study was convenience sampling, selecting 351 individuals meeting the inclusion criteria as participants. Given the nature of the study, data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire on social networks in marital relationships and the Marital Instability Questionnaire by Edwards et al. (1987). Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to ensure data normality. Inferential statistics, including correlation coefficients and multivariate regression analysis, were conducted using SPSS 22 software.

**Findings:** The findings indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.860 between social networks in marital relationships and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam. The coefficient of determination was calculated as 0.739, indicating that 73.9% of the changes in marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam can be attributed to social networks in marital relationships.

**Conclusion:** The findings highlight the significant role of social networks and subjective norms in marital stability, emphasizing their predictive value within the investment model framework for divorcing couples in Ilam.

**Keywords:** Marital Stability, Social Networks, Divorcing Couples in Ilam.

## 1. Introduction

Humans, as social beings, frequently engage in interactive relationships such as friendships, romantic

connections, and family bonds. Among these, marital relationships are typically considered a form of attachment in married adults, representing a transitional stage in terms

of real-life attachment experiences (Singh & Shanbhag, 2025). Within this context, the family holds a unique significance as it constitutes one of the primary elements of society, with a secure society depending on the security of its families (Okonkwo, 2024). Modernity and globalization have brought significant changes to social, economic, cultural, and legal structures, including the family. These transformations pose a serious threat to many values associated with family relationships, such as marital stability (Noroozi Azam et al., 2022; Osei, 2022). Marital instability and disruptions in other relationships have been defining features of the last three decades of the 20th century. Divorce can lead to widespread distress and anxiety among individuals (Okojide et al., 2023; Shahsavari et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2024).

An analysis of demographic data from 58 countries, sourced from the United Nations' demographic yearbook, indicates that most separations and divorces occur around the fourth year of marriage (Haghparsat, 2017). Nevertheless, countless romantic relationships among single individuals also end daily. After years of studying what love is and how it flourishes, social psychologists have now turned their attention to understanding how love ends. The termination of romantic relationships is one of life's painful experiences. Researchers continue to investigate the factors that lead couples to end their relationships. For instance, Dobbs (2000) notes that the dissolution of a relationship is not a singular event but a process comprising various stages. Duck argues that there are four stages in relationship dissolution: intrapersonal (thinking extensively about dissatisfaction in the relationship), dyadic (discussing relationship termination with the partner), social (announcing the breakup to others), and interpersonal (recovering from the breakup and forming an internal understanding of how and why it occurred) (Haghparsat, 2017).

The family is the first and most distinctive social institution, with societal health and success deeply intertwined with the health and satisfaction of its members. The impact of no other individual or relationship—whether positive or negative—matches the durability, depth, or intensity of familial interactions. Family functioning is evident at various levels: individual, dyadic (spouses), and family systems. Moreover, the reciprocal effects of the quality of these interactions on other aspects of family members' lives—such as education, employment, and social relationships—are notable (Nasir, 2017). A family is formed through the marital union of a man and a woman.

The most critical aspect of marriage and family formation is the sense of tranquility derived from the relationship. Unfortunately, statistics show that approximately two-thirds of marriages globally end in divorce (Yang et al., 2024). In recent decades, Iranian families have undergone similar changes. According to statistics published by the National Organization for Civil Registration in 2009, the divorce rate relative to marriage has increased compared to previous years. For every 100 marriages, 14.26 resulted in divorce (Mohamadjani & Fazeli, 2024). With such high divorce rates, it is unsurprising that many researchers are intensely seeking answers to questions like what leads to satisfaction and durability in marriage. Understanding the primary factors associated with marital dissolution or success has become vital for researchers (Broujeni et al., 2024; Golrokh et al., 2024). Today, one of the critical topics in psychology is the focus on family stability or dissolution.

Over the past three decades, research into predictors of commitment and stability in romantic relationships has increased. Findings consistently highlight the importance of high-quality and stable relationships in promoting general health and happiness (Javadi Koma et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Numerous studies have examined variables associated with relationship stability, including dimensions of individual differences and dependency processes. Two major theoretical perspectives guide much of this research: the adult attachment theory and the investment model (Batool et al., 2023).

In the literature on interpersonal relationships, commitment is viewed as the intent to continue a relationship with an interpersonal entity (e.g., a romantic partner, group, or organization). According to the investment model by Rusbult et al. (1998), commitment in a relationship is determined by three primary components: the rewards and costs of the relationship (satisfaction level), perceptions and evaluations of alternative relationships (quality of alternatives), and the magnitude and significance of resources tied to the relationship (investment size) (Pflieger et al., 2022).

The investment model is rooted in the principles of dependence, proposing that dependence creates the subjective experience of commitment, which influences relationship stability, long-term orientation, and psychological attachment to one's partner. While commitment arises from dependence, it affects daily behaviors and fosters transformation in relationships (Ghafari & Seidi, 2022; Pourrajab Ravari & Kamyabi, 2021).

Research by Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986) supports the investment model in romantic relationships among adults. They found that the investment model accurately predicted commitment levels among young and adult individuals based on demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status, education, and income. Rusbult identified two types of investments in a relationship: extrinsic investments, which include material assets like homes and cars linked to the current relationship, and intrinsic investments, which are intangible elements like time, emotional involvement, and self-disclosure (Surjadi et al., 2022).

As investments in the relationship increase, alternative options become less appealing, and commitment to the relationship grows. However, commitment and satisfaction, while influenced by costs and rewards, are not necessarily synonymous. Individuals may remain highly committed to a relationship despite low satisfaction, which is why these factors are assessed independently (Javadi Koma et al., 2024).

Financial matters are a widespread source of conflict among couples. Financial status can indirectly lead to marital distress and low relationship quality (Etcheverry, 2013). Surprisingly, lower-class individuals report less marital satisfaction (Givertz, 2013, 2016). Furthermore, although global marriage rates have gradually declined over the second half of the 20th century, this decline is more pronounced among individuals with lower education levels. However, there is little evidence suggesting that lower-class couples devalue marriage. In fact, couples across social strata assign similar importance to marriage, and lower-class couples do not exhibit more problematic behaviors than upper-class couples (Tan, 2020). Instead, financial concerns and low relationship quality are the most common barriers to marriage among lower-class couples. These findings suggest that, given their high valuation of marriage, lower-class individuals may hesitate to commit without adequate resources (Emery & Lee, 2014).

This study integrates the roles of socioeconomic class, the use of virtual social networks (e.g., Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp), and subjective norms with the theoretical investment model to predict marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and employs a descriptive-correlational method in terms of execution. This type of research analyzes the relationships between variables based on the research objectives and is conducted in a field setting.

The statistical population of this study includes all divorcing couples in Ilam who visited family courts, counseling centers, and divorce registration offices daily during 2019–2020. The sampling method used in this study was convenience sampling. From this population, 351 individuals who met the inclusion criteria were selected as the research sample to participate in the study.

### 2.2. Data Collection

To explore the theoretical aspects of the research topic and to obtain preliminary information, books, articles, theses, and journals were reviewed. Additionally, the internet was used to access articles related to the research subject. Given the nature of the study, data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire on social networks in marital relationships and the Marital Instability Questionnaire by Edwards et al. (1987).

### 2.3. Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the data. To ensure data normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized. Inferential statistics, including correlation coefficients and multivariate regression analysis, were conducted using SPSS 22 software.

## 3. Findings and Results

Table 1 examines the normality of the data distribution for marital stability and social networks in marital relationships.

**Table 1**

*Data Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)*

Component	Significance Level	Result
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Marital Stability	0.085	Data distribution is normal
Relationship Satisfaction	0.094	Data distribution is normal
Quality of Alternatives	0.077	Data distribution is normal
Investment Level in the Relationship	0.104	Data distribution is normal
Social Networks	0.088	Data distribution is normal

The prerequisite for confirming data normality is a significance level greater than 0.05. Since the obtained

significance levels exceed 0.05, the null hypothesis is confirmed, and the data distribution is normal.

**Table 2**

*Correlation Between Social Networks in Marital Relationships and Marital Stability*

Variable 1	Variable 2	Test Type	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Hypothesis Result
Relationship Satisfaction	Marital Stability	Pearson	0.421	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Quality of Alternatives	Marital Stability	Pearson	0.471	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Investment Level	Marital Stability	Pearson	0.366	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Social Networks	Marital Stability	Pearson	0.459	0.000	Reject null hypothesis

### Hypothesis 1

*"There is a significant relationship between relationship satisfaction and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam."*

Table 2, using Pearson's correlation coefficient, examines the relationship between relationship satisfaction and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam. The obtained significance level (0.000) indicates a significant relationship between relationship satisfaction and marital stability. The correlation coefficient (0.421) reveals a positive (direct) relationship between these variables.

### Hypothesis 2

*"There is a significant relationship between the quality of alternatives and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam."*

Table 2, using Pearson's correlation coefficient, examines the relationship between the quality of alternatives and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam. The obtained significance level (0.000) indicates a significant relationship between these variables. The correlation coefficient (0.471) reveals a positive (direct) relationship between the quality of alternatives and marital stability.

### Hypothesis 3

*"There is a significant relationship between the level of investment in the relationship and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam."*

Table 2, using Pearson's correlation coefficient, examines the relationship between the level of investment in the relationship and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam. The obtained significance level (0.000) indicates a significant relationship between these variables. The correlation coefficient (0.366) reveals a positive (direct) relationship between the level of investment and marital stability.

### Hypothesis 4

*"There is a significant relationship between social networks and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam."*

Table 2, using Pearson's correlation coefficient, examines the relationship between social networks and marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam. The obtained significance level (0.000) indicates a significant relationship between these variables. The correlation coefficient (0.459) reveals a positive (direct) relationship between social networks and marital stability.

### Hypothesis 5

*"Social networks in marital relationships can predict marital stability among divorcing couples in Ilam."*

**Table 3**

*Durbin-Watson Test for Hypothesis 5*

Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R-squared)	Adjusted R-squared	Standard Error of Estimate	Durbin-Watson Statistic
0.860	0.739	0.736	1.65846	2.140

Table 3 confirms the independence of errors, as the Durbin-Watson statistic falls within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5 (2.140). Thus, there is no autocorrelation among the residuals, and regression analysis is valid. The correlation between social networks in marital relationships

and marital stability is 0.860, with a coefficient of determination of 0.739. This indicates that 73.9 percent of the variance in marital stability can be explained by social networks in marital relationships.

**Table 4**

*ANOVA for Regression Analysis (Hypothesis 5)*

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Statistic	Significance Level (p)
Regression	2693.003	4	673.251	244.776	0.000
Error	951.664	346	2.750		
Total	3644.667	350			

The F-statistic (244.776) and its significance level (0.000) confirm the existence of a significant model between the variables.

**Table 5**

*Regression Coefficients (Hypothesis 5)*

Model	B	Standard Error	Beta	t-Statistic	Significance Level (p)
Intercept	99.392	1.923		51.687	0.000
Relationship Satisfaction	1.147	0.131	0.323	8.760	0.000
Quality of Alternatives	0.140	0.026	0.193	5.420	0.000
Investment Level	0.353	0.108	0.109	3.270	0.001
Social Networks	0.138	0.036	0.246	3.776	0.000

The regression analysis reveals that each variable contributes significantly to the prediction of marital stability. Social networks, relationship satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment level all have significant positive effects on marital stability.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that the proposed model regarding the role of social networks and subjective norms within the framework of Rusbult's investment model in predicting marital instability among divorcing women in Ilam is well-fitted. The direct effects of marital satisfaction and investment in the relationship on commitment were positive and significant, while the direct effect of the quality of alternative relationships on marital commitment was negative and significant. Furthermore, the direct effect of commitment on marital instability was negative and significant.

The study also showed that commitment mediates the relationship between marital satisfaction, the quality of alternative relationships, investment in the relationship, and

subjective norms about the relationship. These results are consistent with previous (Batool et al., 2023; Broujeni et al., 2024; Ghafari & Seidi, 2022; Golrokh et al., 2024; Javadi Koma et al., 2024; Mohamadjani & Fazeli, 2024; Noroozi Azam et al., 2022; Okojide et al., 2023; Okonkwo, 2024; Osei, 2022; Pandya, 2025; Pflieger et al., 2022; Pourrajab Ravari & Kamyabi, 2021; Shahsavari et al., 2025; Singh & Shanbhag, 2025; Surjadi et al., 2022; Tan, 2020; Wang et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2024).

To interpret these findings, the social exchange theory is notable. According to this theory, individuals' feelings about a relationship depend on their perceptions of the rewards they receive, the costs they incur, their beliefs about the type of relationship they deserve, and the likelihood of finding a better relationship with someone else. Over time, people develop extensive histories of relationships, which lead to specific expectations about current and future relationships. Individuals with high comparison levels expect substantial rewards and minimal costs in their relationships. When a particular relationship does not meet these high expectations, it quickly results in dissatisfaction. Conversely, individuals



with low comparison levels are happier in such relationships because they expect them to be challenging and costly. Ultimately, satisfaction in a relationship depends on individuals' awareness of and perceptions regarding the likelihood of finding better alternatives (Broujeni et al., 2024; Osei, 2022).

All major theories of relationship commitment identify the availability of attractive alternatives as a negative factor that undermines commitment and stability in a relationship. Thus, most empirical evidence in this area aligns with this view. Recent empirical studies have explored how commitment influences attention, perception, and judgment about attractive alternatives through mechanisms that help maintain relationship stability (Lydon, 2010; Lydon & Linardatos, 2012).

In general, when a relationship offers significant rewards, individuals feel satisfied and happy. However, many people, even when dissatisfied and when other options seem more favorable, do not leave their partners. Studies have shown that at least one additional factor must be considered to understand close relationships: investment in the relationship. Rusbult (1983), in her investment model of close relationships, defined investment as anything that individuals contribute to a relationship and would lose if they left it. Concrete examples include financial resources, assets, and property, as well as intangible items like emotional well-being, time, emotional energy spent building the relationship, and the sense of personal integrity that would be lost in the event of separation (Nasir, 2017; Tan, 2020).

Commitment represents the motivation to maintain energy, effort, and perseverance in the face of difficulties. From a cognitive motivation perspective, commitment is associated with cognitive and behavioral mechanisms that help sustain relationships. Numerous studies have examined how varying levels of commitment enhance relationship stability (Lydon, 2010; Lydon & Linardatos, 2012). Based on this, it can be stated that the greater the investment in the marital relationship, the higher the satisfaction, and the lower the quality of alternatives and comparison levels, the stronger the commitment and the greater the likelihood of relationship stability. Conversely, divorcing couples experience lower stability due to dissatisfaction, high-quality alternatives, and minimal investment in the relationship.

Subjective norms are a highly influential variable and can predict relationship stability. Subjective norms refer to the perception of social norms and pressures to perform a

behavior and the evaluation of whether individuals are motivated to follow these pressures. In a relationship, this can affect both commitment and marital instability. For instance, individuals may wonder, "If I get divorced, will I gain the approval of those important to me, or will they approve of my decision?" The findings of this study suggest that divorcing couples seeking to end their relationships may find validation from their social environment and significant others due to cultural shifts. Today, divorce is no longer a stigmatized phenomenon in society, making it easier for individuals to accept divorce and its consequences.

The results of this study showed that social networks significantly correlate with marital instability among divorcing couples. These findings align with prior research (Etcheverry, 2013; Gaines Jr & Agnew, 2003; Givertz, 2013; Nasir, 2017; Tan, 2020). As the number and types of social networks grow daily, users gain new socialization experiences through them (Arriaga, 2004; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Caryl, 2011; Chow & Tan, 2013). With the design and mass production of smartphones and their widespread availability in public markets, social networks have rapidly become platforms that attract numerous users for frequent information exchange. These networks are so powerful and influential that they even create or alter norms, values, and rules. Given their extensive reach, encompassing vast audiences who are members of society, social networks can exert direct and profound effects on society (Haghighparast, 2017).

Therefore, it can be concluded that social networks, both virtual (internet-based) and real (friends, family, and significant others), play a decisive role in the stability or instability of couples' relationships.

## 5. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not allow for causal inferences about the relationships between variables. Self-reported data, including responses on social networks and marital stability, may also be subject to bias due to social desirability or inaccurate recall. Furthermore, cultural and contextual factors specific to Ilam may not be representative of other regions, which could influence the applicability of the results to different populations.

Future research should consider using longitudinal designs to explore the causal pathways between social

networks, subjective norms, and marital stability. Incorporating diverse populations from different cultural and geographic contexts would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Studies could also investigate the impact of specific types of social networks (e.g., virtual vs. real-world networks) and their dynamics on marital relationships. Additionally, exploring other mediating variables, such as emotional intelligence or conflict resolution skills, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing marital stability.

The findings have important implications for practitioners, policymakers, and educators. Marriage counselors and therapists could incorporate strategies to enhance couples' awareness of how social networks and subjective norms influence their relationships. Community programs should focus on promoting healthy communication and conflict resolution skills to strengthen marital stability. Policymakers could design educational campaigns to address the societal norms and pressures surrounding divorce, helping individuals make informed decisions about their relationships. Lastly, fostering digital literacy regarding the appropriate use of social networks can empower couples to maintain healthy boundaries and reinforce their commitment.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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