

The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation in the Relationship Between Attachment Insecurity, Perceived Partner Responsiveness, and Marital Satisfaction Among Female Student-Teachers at Farhangian University

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The Introduction states that “Adult attachment is generally conceptualized along the dimensions of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance,” but the proposed structural model subsequently combines these dimensions under a broader construct labeled “attachment insecurity.” The theoretical justification for this higher-order representation is insufficient. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are theoretically distinct dimensions and may have different associations with emotion regulation, perceived partner responsiveness, and marital satisfaction. The authors should explain why they modeled a general attachment insecurity construct rather than estimating separate pathways for anxiety and avoidance. If a latent higher-order factor was used, its measurement model, factor loadings, and construct validity should be reported; if the two subscales were simply combined, the psychometric and theoretical justification for doing so must be provided.

The Methods section notes that “The sample size was determined with consideration of the requirements of structural equation modeling, the number of observed variables included in the proposed model, and the need for sufficient statistical power.” This statement is too general for reproducibility. The authors should report an explicit a priori sample-size rationale, preferably using power analysis or a recognized SEM sample-size approach. Relevant inputs should include anticipated effect size, statistical power, alpha level, number of predictors or free parameters, and allowance for missing or unusable data. Merely

stating that 320 participants were sufficient for SEM does not demonstrate that the study was adequately powered to detect the reported indirect effects.

The Data Collection Tools section describes the “Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (ECR-R)” in considerable conceptual detail, but essential psychometric information for the present sample is missing. The authors should report the exact scoring procedure, number of items for each anxiety and avoidance subscale, reverse-scored items or scoring rules where relevant, possible score ranges, and the reliability coefficients obtained in this study. Because the model appears to use attachment insecurity as a broader construct, the manuscript should also explain precisely how ECR-R scores entered the SEM. Reporting only that Cronbach’s alpha “was evaluated” is insufficient; the actual alpha or omega coefficients must appear in the Results.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The paragraph beginning “Perceived partner responsiveness is a central construct in contemporary theories of intimacy” provides a useful description of responsiveness, but the manuscript should more clearly distinguish perceived partner responsiveness from related constructs such as social support, partner support, empathy, intimacy, validation, and relationship satisfaction. Because perceived responsiveness is inherently evaluative, there is a risk of conceptual overlap with marital satisfaction. The authors should explain why responsiveness is treated as a theoretically distinct predictor rather than a component of relationship satisfaction and should discuss potential shared-method and conceptual covariance between the constructs. This distinction is essential to establish discriminant validity within the proposed model.

The paragraph stating that “Emotion regulation constitutes another major psychological process in marital functioning” should distinguish emotion regulation from emotion dysregulation more carefully. The study uses the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, for which higher scores represent greater dysregulation, yet the title and several sections refer broadly to “emotion regulation” as the mediator. This creates interpretive ambiguity because a positive effect on “emotion regulation” would ordinarily indicate adaptive functioning, whereas the statistical model actually uses emotion regulation difficulties. The terminology should be standardized throughout the manuscript, preferably using “emotion regulation difficulties” or “emotion dysregulation” when referring specifically to the DERS construct.

The final part of the Introduction argues that “fewer studies have integrated these variables into a single explanatory framework.” This statement identifies the research gap, but it needs greater precision. The authors should specify exactly what is novel: whether no prior study has simultaneously examined attachment insecurity, perceived partner responsiveness, emotion dysregulation, and marital satisfaction; whether the novelty lies in testing emotion regulation as a mediator; or whether the contribution is primarily population-specific because female student-teachers at Farhangian University have rarely been studied. A strong empirical article should articulate a clearly bounded knowledge gap and explain how the proposed model advances existing attachment, responsiveness, and marital-process research beyond prior bivariate findings.

In the Methods section, the sentence “The present study employed a descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design using structural equation modeling” is appropriate but incomplete for evaluating methodological rigor. The authors should specify whether the study was explanatory correlational research, predictive correlational research, or a cross-sectional mediation analysis. More importantly, because mediation ordinarily implies a temporal sequence, the manuscript should explicitly acknowledge in the Methods that the cross-sectional design tests statistical indirect effects rather than temporal or causal mediation. The terminology used throughout the Results and Discussion should avoid implying that attachment insecurity causes emotion dysregulation or that responsiveness produces changes in marital satisfaction.

The participant paragraph states that “A total of 320 participants were recruited using a multistage convenience sampling procedure.” This phrase requires clarification because multistage sampling and convenience sampling represent different methodological concepts. The manuscript should describe each sampling stage explicitly, including how campuses were

selected, how classes or academic programs were approached, how eligible married participants were identified, how invitations were distributed, how many individuals were eligible, how many declined participation, and how many questionnaires were excluded. Without these details, the representativeness of the sample and the risk of self-selection bias cannot be assessed adequately.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.