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Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling of Divorce Intention Based on Attachment Insecurity, Marital Disillusionment, Emotional Loneliness, and Relationship Commitment

Mette. Kristiansen[1], Michael. Davies[2*], Ivana. Radić[3]

[1] Department of Health Psychology, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
[2] Department of Organizational Psychology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
[3] Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia

*** Corresponding author email address**: michael.davies@carleton.ca

Editor	Reviewers
Shahram Vahedi Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Tabriz University, Tabriz, Iran vahedi117@yahoo.com	**Reviewer 1:** Mohammad Hassan Ghanifar Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Birjand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Birjand, Iran. Email: ghanifar@iaubir.ac.ir **Reviewer 2:** Abotaleb Saadati Shamir Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, University of Science and Research, Tehran, Iran. Email: psychology@iau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The Introduction would benefit from a clearer theoretical architecture linking the four predictors to divorce intention. For example, the paragraph beginning “Divorce intention nevertheless occurs within a broader network of personal, interpersonal, cultural, sexual, and value-related variables” proposes that “attachment insecurity may heighten sensitivity to rejection; marital disillusionment may reduce optimism regarding the future; emotional loneliness may indicate the subjective loss of companionship; and low relationship commitment may reduce the psychological forces favoring persistence.” This is an important conceptual statement, but it currently appears late in the Introduction and functions more as a summary than as a formal theoretical model. The authors should introduce this integrative framework earlier and explain whether attachment theory, the Investment Model, disillusionment theory, or another relational framework serves as the overarching theoretical basis for specifying the structural paths.

The manuscript should provide formal ethics information rather than only describing informed consent. The Methods section states that “participation was voluntary and anonymous” and that electronic consent was obtained, but it does not identify an

institutional research ethics board, approval number, or applicable ethical standard. A study involving married adults and questions concerning divorce, infidelity-related experiences, loneliness, and relational distress requires clear documentation of ethical oversight. The authors should state the name of the approving institution, ethics approval code and date, conformity with the Declaration of Helsinki or applicable Canadian research ethics guidance, and procedures used to provide support resources to participants who experienced distress while completing the questionnaires.

The operationalization of emotional loneliness requires closer conceptual scrutiny. The manuscript states that "the present study used the five-item romantic loneliness dimension because the theoretical model specifically concerned unmet emotional connection within the intimate-partner relationship." This is reasonable, but the construct is repeatedly called "emotional loneliness," whereas the selected instrument specifically measures romantic loneliness. These are related but not necessarily interchangeable constructs. The terminology should be standardized throughout the manuscript, and the authors should justify why romantic loneliness can legitimately operationalize the broader construct of emotional loneliness in marriage. If "emotional loneliness" remains the theoretical term, evidence of construct correspondence should be provided.

The operationalization of divorce intention using a modified Marital Instability Index warrants methodological reconsideration. The Methods section states that participants responded to the five-item short form "using a 4-point frequency format ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (frequently)." The authors should establish whether this response format is identical to the validated version of the instrument. If the original response options were altered, this constitutes an adaptation that may affect reliability, thresholds, and validity. The manuscript should clearly distinguish between divorce intention, divorce proneness, and marital instability because these constructs are currently treated almost synonymously. Evidence should be provided that the selected items specifically operationalize intention rather than general instability-related thoughts and behaviors.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The manuscript should formulate explicit hypotheses before the final statement of purpose. At present, the Introduction ends with the sentence, "Accordingly, the present study aimed to test a covariance-based structural equation model of divorce intention based on attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, emotional loneliness, and relationship commitment among married adults in Canada." Because the subsequent Findings section evaluates four specific direct paths, the Introduction should state corresponding directional hypotheses, such as positive effects of attachment insecurity, marital disillusionment, and emotional loneliness and a negative effect of relationship commitment on divorce intention. Explicit hypotheses would substantially improve alignment between the theoretical development, statistical analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

The conceptual treatment of attachment insecurity requires clarification. The Methods section states that "the two first-order dimensions were specified as indicators of a higher-order attachment insecurity construct," combining attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance into a higher-order factor. This specification should be theoretically justified because attachment anxiety and avoidance are distinct dimensions and may have different associations with divorce intention. A second-order factor with only two first-order dimensions also raises identification and interpretational concerns. The authors should report how this higher-order construct was identified, provide evidence supporting its superiority over a correlated two-factor model, and ideally compare a model in which attachment anxiety and avoidance predict divorce intention separately.

The sampling strategy needs substantially greater methodological detail. The Study Design and Participants section reports that respondents "were recruited through online community advertisements, family and relationship forums, community organizations, and electronic announcements distributed across Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta." However, it is unclear whether recruitment used paid advertisements, institutional mailing lists, social media, panel recruitment, snowball sampling, or purposive convenience sampling. The authors should describe the exact recruitment channels, recruitment dates, screening procedures, and any incentives. This information is essential for evaluating selection bias, representativeness, and the extent to which the sample can reasonably be characterized as representing married adults in Canada.

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The rationale for the final sample size of 428 should be provided. The manuscript reports that "an initial 451 individuals entered the survey" and that 428 remained after exclusions, but no a priori power analysis or SEM-specific sample-size justification is presented. Because covariance-based SEM can require substantial sample sizes depending on model complexity, factor loadings, number of latent variables, and anticipated effect sizes, the authors should provide an a priori calculation or an established SEM sample-size rationale. Preferably, the authors should use a Monte Carlo power analysis based on the number of latent variables, observed indicators, and expected standardized path coefficients rather than relying solely on a generic participant-to-parameter ratio.

The eligibility criterion requiring participants to have "adequate English-language proficiency" requires stronger justification in a Canadian sample. Canada is officially bilingual, and the recruitment included Quebec, where excluding French-speaking participants could introduce substantial sampling bias and restrict the study's cultural and linguistic representativeness. The authors should explain why only English-language assessment was used, indicate whether French-language versions of the measures were unavailable, and explicitly acknowledge the resulting limitation. If French-speaking participants were included using translated measures, the translation, back-translation, and measurement-equivalence procedures must be reported.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

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