Modeling Academic Well-Being Based on Self-Regulated Learning and Critical Thinking with the Mediating Role of Academic Motivation in Female Upper Secondary Students with Maladaptive Mobile Phone Dependence

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The statement "Female students, in particular, often report higher levels of academic stress and emotional vulnerability" is theoretically important, yet it is presented descriptively. Consider adding a short explanatory mechanism (e.g., gendered socialization, evaluative pressure, or emotion regulation differences) to justify why female students constitute a theoretically distinct population rather than only an empirically convenient one.

In the paragraph describing sampling, the phrase "accessible sampling method" is used. This term is somewhat vague and may raise concerns about sampling bias. Please specify whether this refers to convenience sampling, cluster-based access, or school-level selection, and discuss how representativeness was addressed or limited.

The description of the screening cutoff ("Scores above 75 indicate maladaptive use") is helpful; however, it is unclear how many students were excluded based on this screening. Reporting the initial screened sample size and exclusion rate would improve methodological transparency.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2.   Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In discussing self-regulated learning, the manuscript cites multiple supporting studies but does not specify which phase(s) of self-regulation (forethought, performance, or self-reflection) are most theoretically linked to academic well-being. Explicitly anchoring the discussion in a recognized self-regulation framework (e.g., Zimmerman's cyclical model) would improve theoretical precision.

The paragraph beginning "In parallel, critical thinking has gained increasing attention…" would benefit from a clearer justification for why critical thinking is modeled as a direct predictor of academic well-being rather than exclusively as an academic performance variable. The authors may consider clarifying the affective or motivational pathways through which critical thinking is expected to influence well-being.

The claim that "academic motivation has been proposed as a central mediating process" is well supported, yet the manuscript does not explicitly state why motivation is positioned as a mediator rather than a moderator. A brief theoretical justification for mediation (e.g., motivational internalization processes) would strengthen the model logic.

When discussing maladaptive mobile phone dependence, the manuscript states that it is a defining characteristic of the sample. However, the paragraph does not sufficiently clarify whether this variable is conceptually exogenous, contextual, or theoretically interactive with the main constructs. Greater clarity here would align the sampling decision with the analytical strategy.

The final sentence clearly states the aim of the study; however, it would be strengthened by explicitly mentioning the analytical method (structural equation modeling) in the aim itself, thereby increasing coherence between objectives and methods.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2.   Revised

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