

Structural Modeling of the Relationship Between Family Cohesion and Fear of Marriage: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem Among University Students Approaching Marriage

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Thseen Nazir Professor of Psychology and Counseling Department, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey thseen.nazir@ihu.edu.tr	Reviewer 1: Mohammadreza Zarbakhsh Bahri Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran. Email: M.Zarbakhsh@Toniau.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Seyed Ali Darbani Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Counseling, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. Email: Ali.darbani@iau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The Methods paragraph describing participants as “all unmarried university students approaching marriage” requires a more rigorous operational definition of “approaching marriage.” The inclusion criterion later specifies being engaged and having undergone a formal marriage proposal, but the terminology should be standardized throughout the manuscript. The authors should clarify whether all participants were formally engaged, whether they had selected a specific partner, whether legal or religious engagement had occurred, and how long they had been in the premarital stage. These variables may meaningfully influence fear of marriage and should be described because a student merely considering marriage may differ substantially from one with an imminent wedding.

The sample description contains a potentially important inconsistency that requires verification. The Results report “the mean age of the participants was 34.16 years (SD = 6.70), with ages ranging from 21 to 39 years.” A mean of 34.16 within a 21–39 range is mathematically possible but implies a sample concentrated heavily toward the upper end of the range, which may be unusual for a university student sample. The authors should verify the raw data and ensure that the mean, standard

deviation, minimum, and maximum are correctly reported. If the mean is accurate, the age distribution should be described more fully and its implications for generalizability discussed.

The Data Analysis paragraph contains a methodological inconsistency between the stated and reported normality tests. The Methods indicate that “data normality [was assessed] using the Shapiro–Wilk test,” whereas the Findings report Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistics. The authors must identify which test was actually used and maintain consistency throughout. More importantly, for SEM with maximum likelihood estimation, univariate normality alone is insufficient; the manuscript should report assessment of multivariate normality, for example Mardia’s coefficient, and describe whether robust estimation or bootstrap procedures were used if normality assumptions were violated.

The assumptions paragraph reports that self-esteem significantly departed from normality ($p = .001$) but then proceeds with maximum likelihood SEM without adequately addressing the violation. The sentence “No evidence was identified that would preclude estimation of the proposed structural model” is too general and unsupported. The authors should report skewness and kurtosis values, multivariate normality diagnostics, outlier criteria, Mahalanobis distance results, and multicollinearity indices such as tolerance and VIF. If nonnormality was meaningful, bootstrapped standard errors, robust maximum likelihood, or another appropriate estimator should be considered and explicitly justified.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The demographic paragraph should be expanded beyond educational level and age. The manuscript studies fear of marriage among students at a specific premarital stage, yet potentially important characteristics such as sex, duration of engagement, field of study, employment status, socioeconomic status, prior romantic relationship history, previous engagement, and parental marital status are not reported. At minimum, sex distribution and engagement duration should be provided because both may be systematically associated with family cohesion, self-esteem, and fear of marriage and could affect the interpretation of the structural paths.

The sample-size justification in the Methods states that “based on Kline’s (2016) recommendation of recruiting at least 10–15 participants per observed variable, the minimum required sample size was estimated to be 300 participants.” This justification needs revision because the structural model appears to contain substantially more than 20 observed indicators if the ten indicators of fear of marriage, family cohesion, and self-esteem are included. The authors should specify exactly how the required sample size was calculated, identify the number of estimated parameters, and preferably support sample adequacy through a model-based rationale, such as the number of free parameters, anticipated effect sizes, desired statistical power, or a Monte Carlo/power-based justification.

The measurement section for the Fear of Marriage Questionnaire requires substantial psychometric clarification. The manuscript states that “the Fear of Marriage Questionnaire developed by Richard and Olson (2007) consists of 30 items,” but the citation and instrument provenance should be verified carefully. The authors should provide the original instrument title, original validation population, scoring range, interpretation of higher scores, factorial structure, and evidence supporting the ten-dimensional structure used in the present SEM. More importantly, reliability estimates should be reported for the current sample, both for the total scale and, where appropriate, for the subscales used as indicators in the structural model.

The paragraph describing the Family Cohesion Questionnaire is conceptually inconsistent with the later Findings. The instrument is described as a 28-item family cohesion scale, yet Table 1 reports “Family cohesion,” “Social problem solving,” and “Cognitive flexibility” as separate components. It is unclear whether social problem solving and cognitive flexibility are subscales of the same instrument, separate measures, or unrelated variables inadvertently included in the table. The authors must resolve this discrepancy and provide a clear measurement model specifying which observed variables represent the latent family cohesion construct.

The Eysenck Self-Esteem Questionnaire section should report the possible total-score range and explain the interpretation of the score. The manuscript states that responses are scored 1, 0, and 0.5, with several reverse-scored items, but it does not

specify the minimum and maximum possible scores or whether higher scores consistently indicate higher self-esteem after recoding. This is particularly important because the observed mean of 19.50 can only be interpreted meaningfully in relation to the instrument's theoretical range and established norms. Current-sample reliability should also be reported.

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2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.