

Evaluation of a Conceptual Model of the Relationships of Communication Patterns and Love Styles with Marital Burnout: The Mediating Roles of Forgiveness and Self-Worth among Married Women

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sample-size justification in the method section is insufficiently transparent. The statement that “the sample size was determined using the formula $N \geq 50 + 8M$, proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), as well as Cochran’s formula” combines two procedures developed for different purposes without explaining which one determined the final sample of 385. The manuscript should define M, identify the number of predictors entered into the calculation, show the resulting sample size under each formula, and explain why Cochran’s formula for an unlimited population was appropriate. Because structural equation modeling was the primary analysis, an a priori power analysis based on model complexity, anticipated effect sizes, degrees of freedom, and desired statistical power would provide a more defensible justification than a general multiple-regression rule.

The participant-recruitment procedure requires substantially more detail. The manuscript reports that participants were selected “through convenience sampling, with particular attention to recruiting individuals from five geographical areas of

Tehran,” but it does not identify the recruitment settings, the number of participants recruited from each area, the recruitment dates, or whether proportional or quota-based procedures were used. The authors should specify whether women were recruited from counseling centers, health centers, community institutions, social media platforms, workplaces, or other locations. Inclusion and exclusion criteria should also be provided, including minimum age, minimum duration of marriage, current cohabitation status, history of divorce proceedings, psychiatric treatment, and incomplete questionnaire thresholds. The number approached, number refusing participation, number excluded, and final response rate should be reported to permit assessment of selection bias.

The method section contains no explicit statement concerning research ethics. A manuscript involving married women and sensitive questions about marital dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and relationship functioning should report approval by a recognized institutional ethics committee, including the ethics code and approving institution. The authors should also state that participants provided informed consent, participation was voluntary, responses were confidential or anonymous, and participants could withdraw without penalty. Procedures for protecting participants experiencing severe marital distress or intimate partner violence should be described, particularly if recruitment occurred in clinical or counseling settings.

Although the demographic form assessed “age, occupation, educational attainment, and duration of marriage,” the findings do not report any demographic characteristics of the 385 participants. A separate participant-characteristics table is needed, presenting the mean, standard deviation, and range for continuous variables such as age and marital duration, and frequencies and percentages for categorical variables such as education and employment status. Additional potentially relevant variables, including number of children, type of marriage, socioeconomic status, previous marriage, and counseling history, should be considered. Without these data, readers cannot evaluate the representativeness of the sample or determine whether the findings apply primarily to a specific subgroup of married women.

Table 1 contains several apparent scoring inconsistencies that must be resolved before the results can be considered reliable. The overall communication-pattern score ranges from 190 to 342, although a 35-item scale scored from 1 to 9 would have a theoretical maximum of 315; therefore, an observed maximum of 342 appears impossible under the stated scoring system. Similarly, the reported means of the three communication subscales—25.84, 24.55, and 15.93—sum to approximately 66.32, which is not compatible with the total mean of 245.00 unless the total score was calculated using a different procedure. The love-style total score ranges from 300 to 395, although a 45-item instrument scored from 1 to 5 should range from 45 to 225. These discrepancies strongly suggest data-entry, transcription, decimal-placement, or scoring errors. The authors should audit the raw dataset, scoring syntax, and all descriptive values before undertaking any further interpretation.

The interpretation of Table 2 depends on the unresolved direction of the communication-pattern score. The manuscript states that communication patterns were negatively correlated with marital burnout, implying that higher scores represent healthier communication. However, the measure includes demand–withdraw and mutual avoidance dimensions, for which higher scores would normally indicate more dysfunctional interaction unless reverse-scored. This issue must be clarified in the table note and method section. In addition, the correlation between love styles and forgiveness is very high, $r = .788$, which raises concerns about empirical overlap and discriminant validity even though it is below the conventional .90 threshold. The authors should calculate the heterotrait–monotrait ratio, compare average variance extracted values with squared interconstruct correlations, and evaluate whether love and forgiveness are sufficiently distinct latent constructs.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The description of the Pines Couple Burnout Measure requires psychometric and scoring clarification. The manuscript states that the instrument contains 21 items measuring physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion, but it does not specify the number of items allocated to each dimension, whether any items are reverse-scored, or whether the total score is calculated as a sum or an average. The possible score range should be explicitly stated and reconciled with the observed values in Table 1.

Moreover, citing a reliability coefficient obtained from “a sample of 240 nurses” provides limited evidence for use among married women because occupational burnout and marital burnout are distinct contexts. The authors should report internal consistency coefficients from the present sample for the total score and each subscale and, ideally, provide evidence that the three-factor structure was supported in the current data.

The section describing the Communication Patterns Questionnaire should identify the exact version and source of the instrument. The sentence “The Communication Patterns Questionnaire developed by Christensen and Shenk (1991)” should be verified against the original publication and the version used in the Iranian validation study, because different forms and item structures of this instrument have appeared in the literature. More importantly, the manuscript reports historical Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .50 to .78, with .50 indicating potentially inadequate reliability. Reliability coefficients for all three subscales in the present sample must be reported. The authors should also explain whether a total score is psychometrically sanctioned, how maladaptive items were coded, and whether higher total scores represent healthier or more dysfunctional communication.

The description of Sternberg’s Triangular Love Scale contains a scoring error. The manuscript states that “the total score ranges from 45 to 225,” which is plausible for the complete 45-item instrument scored from 1 to 5, but the Persian source text appeared to attribute this range to each subscale. Each 15-item subscale should instead have a possible range of 15 to 75 unless a different scoring method was used. The authors should verify the scoring procedure and correct both the method and descriptive results. In addition, the manuscript alternates between “love styles” and “components of love.” Intimacy, passion, and commitment are components of triangular love theory rather than distinct love styles in the conventional typological sense. The terminology should be standardized throughout the title, abstract, model, tables, figure, and discussion.

The Family Forgiveness Scale description requires greater terminological consistency and validation detail. The manuscript identifies the dimensions as “realization, recognition, reparation, restitution, and resolution or a sense of relief,” but these translations should be checked against the original conceptual definitions and the validated Persian version. The number and location of reverse-scored items should be stated, and the possible total and subscale score ranges should be provided. The manuscript should report current-sample reliability for each of the five dimensions and the total score. Because forgiveness is modeled as a latent mediator, the authors should also present confirmatory factor-analysis results showing that the five dimensions adequately represent the proposed forgiveness construct.

The conceptualization of self-worth requires major reconsideration. The manuscript describes the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale and then interprets the resulting score as a general measure of “self-worth.” However, this instrument assesses domains on which self-worth is contingent—such as approval from others, appearance, competition, academic competence, family support, virtue, and God’s love—rather than the overall level of global self-worth. A high score may indicate stronger dependence of self-evaluation on external or domain-specific contingencies, which is not necessarily psychologically protective. Therefore, interpreting a higher total score as “greater self-worth” may be theoretically incorrect. The authors should justify the aggregation of the seven domains, clarify the direction of interpretation, consider renaming the construct “contingencies of self-worth,” and reconsider hypotheses that assume uniformly beneficial effects of higher scores.

The paragraph beginning “Before conducting the inferential analyses, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity” reports conclusions without any supporting statistics. The manuscript should present the number and percentage of missing values, the method used to address them, the criterion for identifying univariate and multivariate outliers, and the number of cases removed. For structural equation modeling, multivariate normality should be assessed using an appropriate statistic such as Mardia’s coefficient, rather than relying only on univariate distributions. Skewness and kurtosis values should be reported for the principal variables, and the estimation method should be justified. Variance inflation factors, tolerance values, or condition indices should be provided rather than inferring the absence of multicollinearity solely because correlations were below .90.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.