




Predicting Women's Life Satisfaction Through Self-Esteem, Meaning in Life, Social Connectedness, and Cognitive Emotion Regulation: A Serial Mediation Model

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Abstract Methods and Materials paragraph, the sentence “Participants were recruited through online platforms, community organizations, and university-affiliated networks” is insufficiently specific for evaluating sampling quality. The authors should clarify whether recruitment was convenience, purposive, snowball, or stratified; whether advertisements were standardized across platforms; whether duplicate participation was prevented; and whether any recruitment targets were set for provinces, age groups, or socioeconomic categories. These details are essential for assessing selection bias and representativeness.

In the first paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence “For women, life satisfaction is particularly important because it is shaped by a complex interplay of personal, social, emotional, and contextual factors” is plausible but overly general. The authors should expand this paragraph with a more specific gender-sensitive rationale explaining why life satisfaction among adult women in Canada requires focused investigation. Relevant contextual factors may include work–family role strain, social support differences, immigrant or cultural diversity, body-image pressures, caregiving burden, employment conditions, and differential exposure to psychological stressors.

In the eligibility-criteria paragraph, the sentence “Participants ranged in age from 18 to 67 years, with a mean age of 36.84 years” is useful, but the manuscript provides limited information on other inclusion and exclusion criteria. The authors should clarify whether women with current psychiatric diagnoses, severe distress, cognitive impairment, or insufficient survey-completion attention were excluded. Because the study examines psychological well-being and emotion regulation, these factors could meaningfully influence the observed associations and should either be controlled or acknowledged.

In the Measures section, the repeated statement that instruments have “demonstrated excellent reliability and validity” is not sufficient for the present sample. The authors should report internal consistency coefficients for each scale in this dataset, preferably both Cronbach’s alpha and McDonald’s omega. If latent variables were used in SEM, the authors should also provide standardized factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and evidence of discriminant validity. Reliance on prior validation alone does not establish measurement quality in the current Canadian sample.

In the Measures paragraph for the CERQ, the sentence “Higher scores on adaptive strategies reflect more constructive cognitive emotion regulation processes, whereas higher scores on maladaptive strategies indicate less effective emotional coping” implies that adaptive and maladaptive subscales were scored separately. However, the Findings report only one “Cognitive Emotion Regulation” mean and one positive structural path to life satisfaction. The authors should explain precisely how the CERQ score was computed and whether maladaptive items were reverse coded, excluded, or modeled separately. This clarification is essential for interpreting the positive association with life satisfaction.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Introduction paragraph discussing self-esteem, the sentence “self-esteem has been identified as a critical psychological mechanism through which social support and environmental resources influence well-being outcomes” introduces a direction of influence that differs from the proposed model, where self-esteem predicts social connectedness and life satisfaction. The authors should clarify the theoretical directionality of the model and distinguish prior evidence in which self-esteem is a mediator from the current model in which self-esteem is the exogenous predictor. Without this clarification, the theoretical logic of the proposed serial pathway appears partially inconsistent.

In the paragraph beginning “One such mechanism is meaning in life,” the manuscript defines meaning in life as “the perception that one’s existence is coherent, purposeful, and significant,” but the Measures section later states that the Meaning in Life Questionnaire includes both Presence of Meaning and Search for Meaning. These two dimensions may have different or even divergent associations with life satisfaction. The authors should specify whether they used the total MLQ score, only the Presence subscale, or both dimensions separately, and they should justify this choice theoretically and psychometrically.

In the Introduction paragraph on social connectedness, the sentence “While digital communication platforms offer opportunities for maintaining relationships, excessive or maladaptive technology use may sometimes undermine psychological well-being” appears somewhat tangential to the proposed model. If digital communication is important to the study rationale, the authors should explain how online interaction quality, digital social comparison, or social media use relates to social connectedness in this sample. Otherwise, this paragraph should be shortened or removed to preserve conceptual focus on the hypothesized mediation model.

In the paragraph beginning “Beyond self-esteem, meaning in life, and social connectedness,” cognitive emotion regulation is described mainly through adaptive strategies such as “positive reappraisal, acceptance, planning, perspective taking.” However, the CERQ also measures maladaptive strategies including self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, and blaming others. The manuscript should clearly state whether cognitive emotion regulation was operationalized as an adaptive-strategy composite, a total CERQ score, or separate adaptive and maladaptive latent variables. Treating the CERQ as a single positive construct may be psychometrically and conceptually problematic.

In the final Introduction paragraph, the sentence “Self-esteem may contribute to stronger perceptions of meaning in life... Meaning in life may subsequently foster social connectedness... Stronger social connectedness may then facilitate adaptive

cognitive emotion regulation” provides the serial logic, but the manuscript does not present explicit hypotheses. The authors should add numbered or clearly stated hypotheses for each direct path, each indirect path, and the full serial mediation path. This would improve transparency and allow readers to evaluate whether the analyses were confirmatory rather than post hoc.

In the Methods and Materials section, the sentence “The study was conducted in Canada between January and April 2026” conflicts with the article-history information showing receipt, revision, acceptance, and publication dates in 2025. This is a major chronological problem. The authors must correct either the data-collection period or the article-history metadata. If data were collected after acceptance, the manuscript would raise serious concerns about research chronology, editorial integrity, and the validity of the reported study timeline.

In the participant paragraph, the sentence “After screening for incomplete responses, response inconsistencies, and multivariate outliers, 701 questionnaires were retained for the final analyses” requires methodological elaboration. The authors should report how many cases were excluded for each reason, what threshold defined incomplete responses, how response inconsistency was detected, and which criterion was used for multivariate outliers, such as Mahalanobis distance with a specified p-value. Without these details, the final sample derivation from 742 to 701 participants is not reproducible.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.