

The Mediating Role of Psychological Distress in Explaining the Relationship Between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Marital Burnout in Women Who Have Experienced Marital Infidelity

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The participant definition in the Method section needs greater operational precision. The manuscript refers to “all married women who had experienced spousal infidelity,” but does not explain how infidelity was defined or verified. Please specify whether infidelity referred to sexual, emotional, online, or combined extradyadic involvement, how the participant became aware of it, whether self-report alone was sufficient for eligibility, and whether any minimum or maximum interval since discovery was imposed. Without a clear operational definition, the sample may include women with substantially different forms and stages of betrayal-related experience.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria should be explicitly reported in the participant paragraph. In addition to being married women with experience of spousal infidelity, it is unclear whether participants were required to remain in the marital relationship, whether women undergoing divorce were included, whether severe psychiatric disorders or current psychiatric hospitalization were exclusion criteria, or whether participants receiving psychotherapy or psychotropic medication were

eligible. These variables could meaningfully affect psychological distress and marital burnout and therefore need to be clarified to allow replication and interpretation.

Table 1 requires a more rigorous psychometric and statistical presentation. The table contains means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among 11 observed domain/subscale variables, but the manuscript subsequently analyzes three latent constructs. It would strengthen the paper to clarify whether the values entered into SEM were summed domain scores, mean scores, standardized scores, or item parcels. In addition, the authors should consider reporting the possible score range for each variable and specify the correlation coefficient used, presumably Pearson's r , in the table note.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The recruitment paragraph states that “links to the questionnaires were distributed through information groups and channels associated with clients and women's support groups.” This raises a potential discrepancy between the stated population of women “attending counseling and psychological service centers” and the actual online recruitment procedure. The authors should explain whether every participant was a registered client of the cooperating centers or whether the questionnaire link could be accessed and forwarded outside those settings. If recruitment extended beyond verified clinic attendees, the defined statistical population should be revised to accurately reflect the sampling frame.

The ethical procedures described in the second Method paragraph are incomplete for a study involving a vulnerable population exposed to relational betrayal and potentially elevated psychological distress. The manuscript mentions anonymity, voluntariness, and withdrawal rights, but does not report approval by an institutional ethics committee, the ethics approval code, or the process of informed consent. Please add the responsible ethics committee, approval identifier, consent procedure, data-protection measures, and any procedure used to provide psychological support or referral if questionnaire completion elicited marked distress.

The description of the Young Schema Questionnaire–Short Form requires careful verification because the manuscript states that the instrument assesses “15 early maladaptive schemas” but then lists schema domains containing more than 15 schema labels, including Negativity/Pessimism, Approval-Seeking/Recognition-Seeking, and Punitiveness. The original 75-item YSQ-SF and later schema formulations are not interchangeable. Please verify the exact version administered, its number of schemas, domain composition, item count, scoring system, and publication source, and ensure that the instrument description corresponds precisely to the version actually used.

The psychometric reporting for all three instruments should include reliability coefficients calculated in the present sample rather than relying only on previous studies. For example, the YSQ-SF paragraph reports a previous Cronbach's alpha of .94, but readers also need internal consistency estimates for the current data. Please report Cronbach's alpha and preferably omega or composite reliability for each latent construct and relevant subscale/domain in this sample. This is particularly important because the measurement model depends on domain/subscale scores as indicators of the latent variables.

The psychological distress measure is described as the DASS-21, and the manuscript calculates a “total score ranging from 0 to 126.” Although a total distress index can be used in some contexts, the structural model shown in the manuscript treats depression, anxiety, and stress as indicators of a higher-order psychological distress construct. The authors should provide a conceptual and psychometric justification for modeling these three DASS dimensions as indicators of one latent factor. Ideally, the measurement model should demonstrate acceptable factor loadings and convergent/discriminant validity for this higher-order conceptualization rather than assuming that the three subscales automatically represent a unidimensional construct.

The Couple Burnout Measure paragraph should be corrected for terminology and source accuracy. The manuscript presents three dimensions as “physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and mental exhaustion,” which is conceptually appropriate, but the source text contained duplicated terminology for two dimensions. Please verify the official dimension labels against the instrument manual or primary source and use the same labels consistently in the Methods, Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1, Results,

and Discussion. The citation “Pines and Nunes (2003)” should also be checked carefully for bibliographic accuracy and consistency with the reference list.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.