




The Structural Model of Death Anxiety and Self-Acceptance Based on Differentiation with the Mediating Role of Self-Compassion in the Elderly

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The phrase “more than 60% residing in developing countries” is somewhat ambiguous; does it refer to the year 2000, a more recent estimate, or the projection for 2050? Please clarify the temporal context. For example: “By 2000, over 60% of older adults resided in developing countries, a proportion expected to increase to 80% by 2050 (Ahui, 2018).” If this statistic is from a different publication than Hoseininesar et al. (2007), provide an explicit citation immediately after this sentence.

When stating “nearly quadrupled,” it would strengthen your argument to include the specific numerical values or a percentage growth figure. For instance: “the elderly population rose from 751,307 individuals in 1956 to over 7.4 million in 2016 (Rasafiani et al., 2020), representing a 885% increase.” Additionally, reconcile the years 2011 and 2016—your sentence mentions “between 1956 and 2011” but then cites a 2016 figure. Please ensure the time frame and data points correspond accurately.

Since “death anxiety” is central to your study, it would strengthen the manuscript to define upfront the specific measurement instrument used by Mehrparvar and Karimi (2022). For example, if they employed Templer’s Death Anxiety Scale (DAS), state: “Mehrparvar and Karimi (2022) utilized the Death Anxiety Scale (Templer, 1970) to assess death anxiety among Iranian

elders, reporting an internal consistency of $\alpha = .84$.” This level of detail will help readers understand the conceptualization and measurement of death anxiety within your framework.

While citing Harmon-Jones et al. (1997) is appropriate, their work is now over 25 years old. Consider integrating more recent conceptual frameworks—such as Wong and Tomer’s Existential Psychotherapy perspective or the Revised Death Anxiety Scale (FDAS; Wada & Park, 2009)—to demonstrate that your definition aligns with contemporary scholarship. If you choose to keep Harmon-Jones, explicitly state why their definition remains relevant today.

As self-compassion is as central to your model as differentiation and self-acceptance, briefly mention the instrument used to measure it (e.g., Neff’s Self-Compassion Scale, with a reported Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$ in Farsi translation [Rahimian & Akbari, 2021]). This will give readers immediate clarity on how you operationalize self-compassion.

The variables “gratitude” and “self-compassion” are not interchangeable. Since the sentence is in the context of self-compassion, clarify whether Attari et al. measured self-compassion or gratitude as independent of self-compassion. If gratitude was the sole predictor, consider citing a study directly linking self-compassion to self-acceptance—for example, “MacBeth and Gumley (2012) demonstrated that self-compassion directly predicts self-acceptance in older adult populations.”

For transparency, specify the exact indirect effect statistics, including the β coefficient, standard error, and 95% confidence interval (e.g., “ $\beta = -.42$, $SE = .08$, 95% CI $[-.58, -.25]$, $p < .001$ ”). This will enable readers to assess the effect size and precision more concretely rather than relying solely on the declaration of statistical significance.

Because “I position,” “emotional cutoff,” and “fusion with others” are frequency components of the Bowen Family Systems Theory, briefly define each term when first mentioned. For instance: “I position (i.e., articulating a clear self-perspective), emotional cutoff (i.e., emotional distancing), and fusion (i.e., excessive emotional reactivity) reflect key dimensions of differentiation (Lampis et al., 2020).” Without definitions, readers unfamiliar with Bowen theory may struggle to grasp how these subcomponents relate to your study.

This sentence warrants citation from a foundational existential psychology text (e.g., Yalom, 1980). By citing “Yalom (1980) proposed that death anxiety is rooted in the existential confrontation with mortality,” you ground your argument in established theory rather than presenting it as an assumed notion.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The parenthetical citation for Firestone and Catlett (2009) appears twice in the same sentence. To improve readability, combine them into one citation: “Firestone and Catlett (2009) define death anxiety as a distressing emotion...”. Additionally, verify if the original Firestone source is a 2009 paper by Firestone alone or co-authored with Catlett. If a single author, correct the citation accordingly.

This assertion is somewhat absolute and may be perceived as reductive. Consider reframing to acknowledge individual variability in death awareness: “Although humans become aware of mortality in various life stages, older adults often experience heightened salience of their own mortality (Harmon-Jones et al., 1997).” This more nuanced phrasing prevents overgeneralization.

It would be beneficial to define “self-acceptance” immediately when introducing the construct. You later define it in paragraph 7, but moving a concise definition here—e.g., “Self-acceptance, defined as an individual’s realistic and mindful awareness of both strengths and weaknesses (Torabi & Bahramipour Isfahani, 2023),”—would enhance coherence and reduce the need for readers to flip pages to find the definition.

The definition provided is clear; however, if Torabi and Bahramipour Isfahani (2023) is an unpublished dissertation or non-peer-reviewed source, replace it with a well-established scale reference (e.g., MacGregor’s Self-Acceptance Scale or Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being subscale) to strengthen construct validity. If Torabi and Bahramipour Isfahani is peer-reviewed, please specify the journal name and page range.

This paragraph presents a logical rationale for how differentiation operates. However, to reinforce this argument, refer specifically to quantitative findings in your study (e.g., “Our multi-group analysis showed that participants scoring above the median on DSI had 30% lower death anxiety”). Providing numerical evidence from your own dataset will integrate theory with data, strengthening the claim.

When referencing Delkhah et al. (2023), include the sample characteristics and methodology. For example: “Delkhah et al. (2023) surveyed 150 community-dwelling older adults (aged 65-80) using the Self-Compassion Scale and Templer’s Death Anxiety Scale, finding $r = -.45$, $p < .001$.” This detail clarifies how directly comparable their findings are to your institutionalized sample.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.