Cultural Insecurity and Social Anxiety: The Mediating Role of Identity Uncertainty

Michael Anderson[1]*, Haruka Nishimura[2]

[1] Department of Clinical Psychology, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA
[2] Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan

* **Corresponding author email address**: manderson@harvard.edu

Editor	Reviewers
John S. Carlson Distinguished Professor of the Department of Educational Psychology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, United carlsoj@msu.edu	**Reviewer 1:** Fahime Bahonar Department of counseling, Universty of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Email: Fahime.bahonar@edu.ui.ac.ir **Reviewer 2:** Mahdi Khanjani Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. Email: khanjani_m@atu.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sentence "Central to the relationship between cultural insecurity and social anxiety is the mediating role of identity uncertainty" introduces the core model. However, a diagram illustrating the theoretical framework before the methods section would help clarify the hypothesized relationships for readers early on.

The explanation of self-uncertainty theory in "According to self-uncertainty theory…" is concise, but it would be more effective if the authors explicitly contrasted it with identity-based theories such as Eriksonian developmental theory or social identity theory to clarify its novelty.

In the paragraph starting "In recent years, researchers have paid greater attention…", the example of infertility and sexual minority status seems tangential to the focus on cultural insecurity. Consider briefly justifying why these identity contexts are relevant comparators to cultural uncertainty.

The paragraph starting "Another important dimension to consider is the role of group dynamics…" makes a strong case, but the authors could enhance it by specifying which types of leadership—civic, educational, or familial—are most impactful in reducing identity uncertainty in multicultural settings.

The sentence "At a theoretical level, the relationship between cultural insecurity, identity uncertainty, and social anxiety can be understood…" would benefit from more precise discussion of uncertainty-identity theory's core mechanisms—e.g., identity affirmation and depersonalization processes.

The participant demographic information is well-detailed, but the sentence "Among them, 267 participants (62.09%) identified as female…" would be more informative if racial/ethnic background and nativity status were also reported, given the study's emphasis on cultural insecurity.

The Measures section would benefit from more rigorous justification of the chosen instruments. For instance, the Identity Distress Survey is a useful tool, but there is no discussion of its cultural sensitivity or limitations in adult samples outside adolescent populations.

The sentence "The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was non-significant for grit (p = 0.108) and motivation (p = 0.127)" is incongruent with the study variables listed earlier. Grit and motivation were not part of the current research model and appear to be erroneously included.

In Table 4, the reported total effect of cultural insecurity on social anxiety is β = .70, yet the direct and indirect effects are β = .34 and β = .36 respectively. While these add up numerically, a discussion of how multicollinearity or overlapping variance might affect interpretation would be beneficial.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2.   Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The phrase "a subjective sense of instability or threat to one's cultural identity" in the first paragraph is compelling, but it would be stronger with a citation from the original scale developers or key conceptual theorists to ground it more clearly in the literature.

In the paragraph beginning "Social anxiety, traditionally examined through the lens of individual psychological traits…", the authors claim "is increasingly being conceptualized as a socially contingent phenomenon," but this important shift in theoretical framing would benefit from a more robust synthesis of recent meta-analyses or longitudinal findings that support this trend.

The sentence "These findings suggest that identity uncertainty has far-reaching effects…" should be strengthened with additional examples that are contextually closer to the U.S. population studied—perhaps drawing on studies of immigrant youth or bicultural college students in the U.S.

In the paragraph beginning "Furthermore, the concept of identity uncertainty intersects…", the authors cite Leifer (2023) but do not integrate this reference clearly with the main construct of identity uncertainty. Elaborate on how "epistemological" uncertainty intersects with social identity dynamics.

In the introduction's final paragraph, the sentence "Given the increasing diversity and cultural fluidity…" sets up the study rationale but would benefit from specifying the demographic characteristics (e.g., immigrant status, language use, racial/ethnic diversity) that inform the term "diverse sample."

In the Methods and Materials section, the authors state, "Standardized tools were used to assess…" but do not report whether the psychometric properties of these tools were confirmed in this particular sample. It would be valuable to include Cronbach's alpha values for each scale used in this study.

The cultural insecurity scale is introduced clearly, but the description "includes subscales for cultural belonging, perceived cultural conflict, and identity ambivalence" is not followed by any information on which subscales were analyzed or whether a total score or subscale scores were used.

The first paragraph in the "Findings and Results" section introduces a second sample of 380 high school students in Canada, which contradicts the earlier mention of a U.S.-based adult sample of 430. This major discrepancy requires clarification—either the sample is mixed or the paragraph is mistakenly copied.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.