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Structural Relationships Between Metacognitive Beliefs and Willingness to Marry: The Mediating Roles of Interpersonal Communication Skills and Cognitive Flexibility

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the first Method paragraph, the sampling description contains an important inconsistency between “a list of eligible unmarried students was prepared” and the subsequent use of “convenience sampling.” If a formal list of eligible students was available through academic departments, the authors should specify why probability sampling was not implemented and how participants were approached from that list. The current wording leaves unclear whether students were recruited through classroom announcements, electronic invitations, direct contact, or self-selection. This should be described because convenience recruitment can introduce systematic self-selection bias, particularly in a study of marriage willingness.

In the second Method paragraph, the sentence “written informed consent was obtained” should be accompanied by explicit research-ethics information. The manuscript currently states that institutional authorization was obtained but does not report an ethics committee approval code, approval date, or statement concerning conformity with recognized ethical principles for research with human participants. The authors should provide the formal ethics approval identifier and explain that participation was voluntary, participants could withdraw without penalty, and no personally identifying information was collected. This is

especially important because attitudes toward marriage, personal relationships, and psychological functioning may be perceived as sensitive information.

In Table 1 and the paragraph immediately following it, the statement that "the mean levels of metacognitive beliefs, interpersonal skills, and cognitive flexibility were moderate to high, whereas willingness to marry was at a moderate level" is not adequately supported. Means cannot be characterized as "moderate," "high," or "moderate to high" without validated normative thresholds, theoretical scale midpoints, or established interpretive cutoffs. For example, the total interpersonal-skills mean of 107.67 appears inconsistent with the stated scoring range of 60–300 and the manuscript's own categorical interpretation that scores of 60–130 indicate poor skills. The authors should either provide validated criteria for these qualitative labels or remove them and report the descriptive statistics without categorical interpretation.

In the paragraph preceding Table 2, the statement "Given that the eigenvalues for these variables were also close to zero ... the assumption concerning the absence of problematic multicollinearity ... was satisfied" appears methodologically incorrect. In collinearity diagnostics, very small eigenvalues can indicate near-linear dependencies and are not themselves evidence of the absence of multicollinearity. The interpretation should focus on VIF and condition indices, and the authors should specify how the condition indices were calculated. In PLS-SEM, VIF thresholds more conservative than 10 are frequently used; therefore, the authors should justify the selected cutoff and report whether inner-model VIF or indicator-level VIF was evaluated.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph describing the Marriage Willingness Questionnaire, the interpretation and dimensional structure of the instrument require substantially greater precision. The manuscript states that the scale consists of "attitudes toward marriage," "readiness and willingness to marry," "attitudes toward the consequences of marriage," and "barriers to marriage," but it does not clarify whether negatively oriented dimensions are reverse-coded before calculating the total score. The authors should explicitly state the possible total-score range, the interpretation of higher scores, the number of items per subscale, and whether the total score used in the structural model reflects a unidimensional latent construct or an aggregate of heterogeneous dimensions. This clarification is essential for interpreting the dependent variable.

In the MCQ-30 paragraph, the psychometric description should be checked carefully for numerical and terminological accuracy. The text reports a test–retest coefficient of ".81" for cognitive self-consciousness in one place in the translated version, whereas the Persian source appears to contain "81/9," which is clearly impossible as a reliability coefficient and likely represents a typographical error. All reported psychometric statistics should be verified against the original validation publication rather than reproduced from potentially corrupted secondary sources. The authors should also distinguish consistently among "metacognitive beliefs," "metacognitions," and specific MCQ-30 subdimensions to avoid implying that the total score represents uniformly adaptive cognition.

In the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory paragraph, the dimensional description appears inconsistent with the standard structure of the CFI. The manuscript states that the instrument contains three components, including "Alternatives for Human Behavior (Items 10 and 18)," while also assigning Item 18 to the Alternatives subscale. The authors should verify the original scoring structure against Dennis and Vander Wal's instrument and the Persian validation study. Any overlapping item assignment must be corrected. In addition, because the Iranian validation study reportedly supported a two-factor structure, the authors should explain whether the present analysis used the original structure, the Persian two-factor solution, or only the total score.

In the Communication Skills Test–Revised paragraph, there is a major internal inconsistency that must be corrected before publication. The manuscript describes the instrument as containing "34 items," yet the listed subscale item numbers extend to Item 60, and the stated total-score range is 60–300. These features cannot simultaneously describe a 34-item questionnaire scored from 1 to 5. The authors need to identify the exact version of the instrument administered, report the correct number of

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items and subscale composition, and revise the scoring range accordingly. This is not a minor editorial issue; it affects reproducibility, interpretation of Table 1, and confidence in the measurement model.

In the final paragraph of the Method, the sentence “normality of the data distribution [was examined] using skewness and kurtosis coefficients” conflicts with Table 1, which presents a “Normality Statistic” and p values such as $p < .001$, suggesting that a formal normality test—most likely Kolmogorov–Smirnov or Shapiro–Wilk—was actually conducted. The authors should identify the exact normality test used and report skewness and kurtosis separately if those indices were also examined. Moreover, in PLS-SEM, multivariate normality is not a strict distributional requirement in the same manner as covariance-based SEM, so the rationale for emphasizing normality testing should be framed appropriately.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

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

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