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The Relationship of Personality Traits and Marital Satisfaction With Fear of Childbirth: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the first Methodology paragraph, the population is described as pregnant women attending prenatal clinics during 2025–2026, whereas the Findings indicate an analytical sample of N = 409 despite an initially planned/recruited sample of 420. The manuscript should provide a participant-flow account explaining what happened to the 11 cases that were not analyzed. Please report the number approached, eligible, consented, excluded, withdrawn, and omitted because of incomplete questionnaires or missing data. In an SEM study, the authors should also explain how missing data were handled and whether the excluded participants differed systematically from the analyzed sample on available demographic variables.

In the paragraph describing the Morris General Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, the manuscript states that the instrument contains “16 items” but then reports three subscales comprising “6 items,” “7 items,” and “8 items,” which sum to 21 rather than 16. This internal inconsistency must be corrected before the psychometric results can be interpreted. The authors should consult the original instrument, identify the exact version administered, report the correct number of items in each subscale, explain the scoring procedure, and state whether any items are shared across dimensions. The reliability and validity information should correspond specifically to the version actually used in this study.

In the paragraph describing the Afroz Marital Satisfaction Scale, the manuscript states that the measure includes “51 items and 10 subscales/components,” but the listed item ranges omit Items 38–41 and enumerate only nine explicitly named domains before referring to a total score. Please verify the original scale structure and provide all subscales with their correct item ranges. This issue is especially important because the Findings later report correlations for 10 dimensions, including “problem-solving satisfaction,” which is not explicitly identified in the Methodology. The measurement description and the variables analyzed in Table 1 must correspond exactly.

In the Methodology sentence “Finally, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and... structural equation modeling with SPSS version 22,” the statistical software description is technically incomplete. Standard SPSS does not estimate covariance-based structural equation models unless an additional package such as AMOS is used. The authors should specify the exact SEM software and version, for example AMOS 22, and report the estimation method used, such as maximum likelihood. In addition, assumptions relevant to SEM—including multivariate normality, influential outliers, linearity, multicollinearity, and missing-data mechanisms—should be reported before the structural model results.

In Table 1, the correlation between total self-efficacy and fear of childbirth is reported as $r = -.114$, $p = .022$, whereas in Table 3 the structural path from self-efficacy to fear of childbirth is $\beta = .058$, $p = .273$, with a reversal in sign. This difference is statistically possible after adjustment for other predictors, but it deserves explicit investigation rather than only descriptive acknowledgment. The authors should examine potential suppression, shared variance, multicollinearity, and correlations among personality, marital satisfaction, and self-efficacy. Reporting the complete correlation matrix among all principal study variables, rather than correlations only with fear of childbirth, would substantially improve interpretability.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In Table 1 and its accompanying paragraph, the authors present a single score labeled “Personality traits” with $M = 30.69$ and $SD = 5.76$, although the NEO-FFI conceptualizes neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness as distinct dimensions rather than a theoretically meaningful global personality score. The manuscript must explain how this composite “personality traits” score was constructed and justify its use. Summing or averaging fundamentally different Big Five dimensions, especially when neuroticism has an opposite conceptual direction from several other traits, may produce a score with ambiguous psychological meaning and may compromise interpretation of the SEM path “Personality traits $\rightarrow$ Fear of childbirth.”

In Table 3, the path “Personality traits $\rightarrow$ Self-efficacy” is reported as $\beta = .169$, $p = .008$, and “Personality traits $\rightarrow$ Fear of childbirth” as $\beta = -.129$, $p = .016$. These structural paths require a clearer specification of the latent-variable model. Please indicate whether “personality traits” was modeled as a latent second-order factor defined by the five NEO dimensions, an observed composite variable, or another construct. If it was modeled as a latent factor, standardized factor loadings and measurement-model fit should be reported. If it was an observed composite, its psychometric and theoretical justification is required.

The manuscript’s stated purpose emphasizes “the mediating role of self-efficacy,” yet the Results section reports only direct path coefficients and does not provide any formal indirect-effect estimates. This is a major analytical omission. Mediation cannot be established merely because personality traits and marital satisfaction predict self-efficacy. The authors should estimate and report the indirect effects of personality traits on fear of childbirth through self-efficacy and of marital satisfaction on fear of childbirth through self-efficacy, preferably using bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals based on at least 5,000 resamples. The total, direct, and indirect effects should be presented with standardized coefficients and confidence intervals.

Relatedly, in the Discussion paragraph stating that “the present results do not provide strong support for self-efficacy as a general mediator,” this conclusion should not be based solely on the nonsignificant direct path from self-efficacy to fear of childbirth. Contemporary mediation analysis does not require all component paths to be individually significant in the

traditional causal-steps sense; the inferential test should focus directly on the indirect effect and its bootstrap confidence interval. The discussion should therefore be revised after formal mediation testing. If the indirect effect is nonsignificant, state this explicitly; if significant despite the nonsignificant individual path, the current interpretation would need substantial revision.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.