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# Self-Perception and Dark Triad Personality Traits as Predictors of Marital Burnout Among Married Adults

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|---|---|
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## 1. Round 1

### *1.1. Reviewer 1*

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the paragraph beginning “A second line of inquiry concerns the Dark Triad: Machiavellianism, narcissism, and subclinical psychopathy” would benefit from a more sophisticated treatment of the three traits. The manuscript appropriately notes that they are related but non-equivalent, yet the hypothesized mechanisms linking each trait to marital burnout remain somewhat generic. The authors should specify distinct pathways: for example, Machiavellianism may operate through strategic manipulation and distrust, narcissism through entitlement and sensitivity to ego threat, and psychopathy through callousness, impulsivity, and diminished empathic responding. These differentiated mechanisms are especially important because the results later show that psychopathy and narcissism, but not Machiavellianism, were retained in the stepwise model. A priori theoretical differentiation would make the facet-level findings more interpretable and reduce the appearance of post hoc explanation.

The final paragraph of the Introduction states that “Three questions were examined: (a) whether global self-perception and global Dark Triad scores were correlated with marital burnout; (b) whether both constructs explained unique variance when entered into a stepwise regression model; and (c) which of the four self-perception facets and three Dark Triad dimensions were retained as predictors in separate stepwise models.” This paragraph is clear, but it should be converted into explicit

hypotheses rather than only research questions because directional expectations are already stated. For example, the authors should hypothesize that self-perception will be negatively associated with marital burnout, Dark Triad traits will be positively associated with marital burnout, and selected subdimensions—particularly psychopathy and socially relevant self-perception domains—will explain additional variance. Even if no directional hypotheses are justified for individual facets, the rationale for treating those analyses as exploratory should be stated explicitly.

A major issue arises in Table 2 and the accompanying note, which states that "Component means for marital burnout do not sum to the reported global mean, so cross-scale arithmetic should not be inferred from these summaries without checking the original scoring data." This discrepancy requires resolution rather than merely acknowledgment. If the global score is the sum of the physical, emotional, and psychological components, the component means should mathematically correspond to the total unless different scoring transformations were used. The authors should return to the raw dataset, verify item coding, reverse scoring, missing-value handling, subscale construction, and total-score computation, and then correct Table 2 as necessary. A manuscript should not retain unexplained inconsistencies in descriptive statistics because they raise concern about the accuracy of subsequent correlational and regression analyses.

The Statistical Analysis section reports that "The study also reported Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests, tolerance and variance inflation factors (VIF), and the Durbin–Watson statistic as regression diagnostics." This diagnostic strategy is incomplete for multiple linear regression. The authors should additionally examine and report linearity, homoscedasticity, normality of residuals rather than only raw variable distributions, influential cases, standardized residuals, leverage values, and Cook's distance. Scatterplots or residual plots should be inspected, and multivariate outliers could be evaluated using Mahalanobis distance where appropriate. Moreover, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is highly sensitive to sample size and should not be treated as the sole criterion for normality. Graphical diagnostics such as Q–Q plots would provide a more meaningful assessment.

The use of stepwise regression requires serious reconsideration. The manuscript states that "Stepwise multiple regression first examined self-perception and overall Dark Triad traits as predictors of marital burnout" and then applied separate stepwise procedures to the constituent dimensions. Stepwise methods are strongly data-dependent, inflate Type I error, can yield unstable variable selection, and often produce overly optimistic estimates of explained variance. Because the study already has a clear theoretical framework, hierarchical multiple regression would be more defensible: for example, self-perception could be entered in one block and Dark Triad traits in another according to theoretical rationale, while demographic covariates could be controlled in an initial block. At minimum, the authors should justify the stepwise procedure, acknowledge its limitations prominently, and ideally conduct a sensitivity analysis using simultaneous or hierarchical entry.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

### *1.2. Reviewer 2*

Reviewer:

In the Methods section, the sentence "A descriptive, cross-sectional correlational survey was conducted among married residents of Isfahan, Iran, in 2026" is appropriate, but the sampling description is insufficient for reproducibility. The authors should provide detailed information about recruitment locations, recruitment procedures, inclusion and exclusion criteria, age eligibility, minimum marriage duration if applicable, whether participants were currently cohabiting with their spouses, and how duplicate participation from spouses within the same household was handled. Because the manuscript refers to "married adults" rather than couples, it is particularly important to clarify whether both members of the same couple could enter the sample independently and, if so, whether the statistical independence assumption could have been affected.

The Methods state that "A convenience sampling strategy was used to recruit 300 respondents" and that "Sample-size planning was described as relying on the Cochran formula and comparable studies, although population parameters and a formal power calculation were not specified." This is a methodological weakness that should be addressed directly. The authors should provide the exact Cochran formula used, the assumed population size or whether the infinite-population version was



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applied, the confidence level, margin of error, estimated proportion, and any allowance for incomplete questionnaires. More importantly, because the primary analyses are multiple regressions, an a priori or sensitivity power analysis based on the number of predictors and expected effect size would be more analytically appropriate than a survey-proportion formula. If such an analysis was not conducted prospectively, a transparent sensitivity analysis could still indicate the minimum detectable effect with N = 300.

The description of the Self-Perception Questionnaire states that "The 30-item Self-Perception/Self-Apperception Questionnaire attributed to Pourhossein and Ghasemi (2007) assesses four domains: material or physical self, active self, social self, and psychological self-awareness." The measure requires substantially more psychometric detail. The authors should provide the number of items in each subscale, example items, response anchors, scoring direction, reverse-scored items if any, interpretation of total and subscale scores, and evidence for factorial validity. The terminology "material/physical self" is especially ambiguous and could easily be misconstrued as socioeconomic status, materialism, or body image. The authors should define exactly what this domain measures and use one consistent English label throughout the manuscript, tables, and discussion.

The Methods state that the Dirty Dozen "contains four items each for Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy" and that "the study describes nine-point agreement responses." The authors should clarify whether an officially validated Persian version of the Dirty Dozen was used and provide the citation and details of its translation and cultural adaptation. If the measure was translated specifically for this study, forward translation, back-translation, expert review, pilot testing, and linguistic equivalence procedures should be reported. The reported internal consistencies for some subscales are relatively modest, particularly values around .68–.69, and therefore reliability should be discussed more critically. Reporting McDonald's omega in addition to Cronbach's alpha would also strengthen the measurement section, particularly for short four-item subscales.

In the marital burnout measure description, the manuscript states that "The Couple Burnout Measure (CBM) developed by Pines (1996) assesses physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion in a committed relationship." However, the reference list provided in the manuscript does not appear to fully document the validation of the specific Persian version used in the present study. The authors should report whether the CBM had previously been psychometrically validated in an Iranian population and should cite that validation directly. They should also specify the subscale composition, reverse-scoring procedure, total score calculation, and whether higher scores consistently represent greater burnout after reversal. This is particularly important because the descriptive values reported for the component scores do not appear to sum straightforwardly to the reported global score.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

**2. Revised**

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



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