

A Structural Model of Mothers' Authoritative Parenting Based on Attachment Styles: The Mediating Roles of Psychological Flexibility and Risk Aversion

Leila. Hashemi¹, Hossein. Baghooli^{2*}, Maryam. Kouroshnia²

¹ Ph.D. Candidate in Psychology, Department of Psychology, Ro.C., Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran

² Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Marv.C., Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: Hossein.Baghooli@iau.ac.ir

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Monika Szczygiel ^{id} Department of Psychology, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland monika.szczygiel@uj.edu.pl	Reviewer 1: Abolghasem Khoshkanesh ^{id} Assistant Professor, Counseling Department, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran. Email: akhoshkonesh@sbu.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Thseen Nazir ^{id} Professor of Psychology and Counseling Department, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey. Email: thseen.nazir@ihu.edu.tr

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the final paragraph of the introduction, the sentence “Accordingly, the present study aimed to develop and test a structural model of mothers’ authoritative parenting based on secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment styles, with psychological flexibility and risk aversion serving as mediating variables” provides the general aim but does not state explicit hypotheses. The manuscript should specify directional hypotheses for each structural path, including the expected positive effect of secure attachment, negative effects of avoidant and ambivalent attachment, positive effect of psychological flexibility, negative effect of risk aversion, and the hypothesized indirect effects through both mediators. Explicit hypotheses would make the model confirmatory rather than appearing partly exploratory.

In the introduction paragraph beginning “Parenting is one of the most influential developmental contexts,” the discussion of authoritative parenting is conceptually sound but requires a more precise distinction between parenting styles and parenting practices. Authoritative parenting is treated as a stable style, yet several examples refer to discrete practices such as monitoring,

reasoning, and autonomy support. The authors should define the construct operationally and clarify whether the study assesses a broad parenting style, a latent dimension derived from several practices, or a reduced subscale of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire.

In the same measurement paragraph, the sentence “Items 1, 11, and 22 were excluded from the final measurement model because their standardized factor loadings were below 0.40” raises concerns about post hoc scale modification. The authors should report the exact loadings of the removed items, provide theoretical reasons for their poor performance, and indicate whether correlated residuals or modification indices were used. Because item deletion can capitalize on sample-specific variance, the revised factor structure should ideally be cross-validated in an independent sample or, at minimum, acknowledged as provisional.

In the Adult Attachment Scale paragraph, the reported latent correlations of -0.81 between secure and avoidant attachment and -0.91 between secure and ambivalent attachment suggest a possible discriminant-validity problem. A correlation of -0.91 is particularly high and may indicate that secure and ambivalent attachment are not empirically distinct in this sample. The authors should report discriminant-validity statistics such as the heterotrait–monotrait ratio, average variance extracted, or comparisons between constrained and unconstrained factor models. The possibility of multicollinearity among attachment predictors must also be examined before interpreting the structural paths.

In the paragraph on the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire–II, the manuscript states that the instrument was used to assess “psychological flexibility.” However, the AAQ-II is often interpreted as primarily measuring psychological inflexibility or experiential avoidance, with higher raw scores typically reflecting greater inflexibility unless scores are reversed. The authors must clearly explain the scoring procedure, indicate whether items were reverse-coded, and specify whether higher scores in the present study represent flexibility or inflexibility. Without this clarification, the direction of the reported path coefficients cannot be evaluated reliably.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph stating that “Psychological flexibility and risk aversion may constitute two such processes,” the theoretical basis for placing the two mediators in parallel is not sufficiently developed. The authors should explain whether psychological flexibility and risk aversion are assumed to operate independently, sequentially, or reciprocally. Given the strong observed correlation between them, the manuscript should justify why a parallel mediation model was selected instead of a serial mediation model in which attachment influences psychological flexibility, which in turn affects risk aversion, or vice versa.

In the paragraph discussing “risk aversion” as a parenting-related mechanism, the construct requires sharper conceptual delimitation. The study uses a general decision-making measure, but the interpretation repeatedly refers to parental overprotection, tolerance of risky play, and restriction of children’s autonomy. These are not necessarily equivalent to general risk aversion. The authors should acknowledge this construct-to-measure gap and avoid interpreting a general risk-aversion score as if it directly measured parenting-specific risk perceptions or parental safety behavior.

In the “Study Design and Participants” section, the sentence “Based on Kline’s recommendation regarding the sample size required for structural equation modeling, 250 eligible mothers were selected” is too general. The specific Kline criterion used should be reported, such as the recommended ratio of participants to estimated parameters or the minimum sample size for maximum-likelihood estimation. The authors should additionally report the number of free parameters in the final model and provide a power or Monte Carlo justification for detecting indirect effects, because mediation paths often require larger samples than simple direct effects.

In the paragraph describing “multistage stratified random sampling,” the sampling procedure is not reported in sufficient detail to establish that the sample was genuinely probabilistic. The manuscript should state the number of educational districts, the number of schools selected from each district, the method used to randomly select schools, the number of mothers invited,

the number who responded, and the response rate. It should also clarify whether electronic recruitment through parent groups introduced self-selection that may have weakened the intended random-sampling design.

In the participant eligibility paragraph, the exclusion criterion “use of specific medications that could substantially affect cognitive or emotional functioning” is vague and potentially difficult to apply consistently. The authors should identify which medication categories were considered exclusionary, how medication use was assessed, whether it was self-reported, and whether any participants were excluded for this reason. Similarly, the criterion involving “diagnosed severe psychological disorder” requires specification of who made the diagnosis and how the research team verified it.

In the ethics paragraph, the sentence “the study was conducted under the ethical approval issued by the Research Deputy of Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch” should be revised to provide the exact institutional review board or ethics committee name and the full ethics approval code. The manuscript should also indicate whether the electronic consent procedure was equivalent to written consent and explain how anonymity, secure data storage, and withdrawal rights were managed for online responses.

In the paragraph describing the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire, the authors state that “only the authoritative parenting dimension was included in the analyses.” This decision requires stronger justification because excluding the authoritarian and permissive dimensions removes the possibility of evaluating discriminant validity among parenting styles. The authors should explain whether the study’s theoretical objective required a unidimensional outcome and should discuss the potential loss of information resulting from analyzing only one subscale of a multidimensional instrument.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.