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Serial Mediation of Rumination and Emotion Dysregulation in the Relationship Between Peer Victimization and Adolescent Depression

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The Introduction states that “Research conducted in Mexico is comparatively limited relative to studies from North America, Europe, and East Asia,” but this claim is not sufficiently developed. Because the Mexican context is presented as an important contribution of the study, the authors should explain what cultural, educational, familial, or peer-system characteristics make testing the model in Mexico theoretically informative rather than merely geographically novel. The manuscript would benefit from a more explicit discussion of whether interpersonal collectivism, family connectedness, school climate, socioeconomic inequality, or norms concerning emotional expression might alter the effects of peer victimization, rumination, or emotion regulation. Without such contextualization, the Mexican sample risks appearing incidental to the theoretical contribution.

In the Study Design and Participants section, the manuscript reports, “A total of 684 adolescents initially completed the questionnaires. After screening the data for incomplete questionnaires, patterned responding, and cases with substantial missing data, 27 cases were excluded, resulting in a final analytical sample of 657 adolescents.” The criteria for excluding these 27 cases need to be operationalized. The authors should report how “substantial missing data” was defined, how patterned responding was detected, whether completion-time thresholds or long-string indices were used, how many participants were excluded for each reason, and whether excluded participants differed from retained participants on available demographic

characteristics. Transparent reporting of exclusions is essential because post hoc case removal can affect correlation and mediation estimates.

In the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale paragraph, the manuscript describes the original 36-item DERS and states that “the total score was used in the present study as the second mediator.” The authors should justify the decision to use a global DERS score rather than its six subscales. Some dimensions, particularly lack of emotional awareness, have shown psychometric behavior distinct from other DERS domains in certain populations. At minimum, the authors should report whether the total-score factor structure was appropriate in this sample, preferably using confirmatory factor analysis or citing validation evidence for the specific Spanish version. Reporting Cronbach’s alpha alone does not establish structural validity.

In the Data Analysis section, the statement that “The distributions of the study variables were evaluated using skewness and kurtosis coefficients, histograms, and normal probability plots” should be expanded into a reproducible assumptions-analysis procedure. The authors should provide the actual criteria used for acceptable skewness and kurtosis, the method used to identify univariate and multivariate outliers, and the exact Mahalanobis-distance threshold or probability criterion. Furthermore, because bootstrapping is used for indirect effects, normality of the indirect-effect sampling distribution is not required. The Methods should distinguish assumptions relevant to the constituent OLS regression equations from assumptions that bootstrapping specifically relaxes.

Table 1 presents Cronbach’s alpha values of .88, .91, .93, and .89 for the four principal measures. These reliability estimates are useful but should not be treated as sufficient evidence of measurement quality. The authors should consider reporting McDonald’s omega, particularly for multidimensional instruments such as the DERS and peer-victimization scale, and should clarify whether alpha was calculated for the total score after any reverse scoring. If the manuscript retains only alpha, it should avoid wording that implies reliability or validity has been comprehensively established solely from internal consistency coefficients.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The same Methods paragraph should provide a formal sample-size or statistical-power justification for $N = 657$. Because the principal analysis involves several regression equations and bootstrapped indirect effects, simply reporting the achieved sample is insufficient. The authors should indicate whether an a priori power analysis was performed and specify the assumed effect size, alpha level, desired power, number of predictors, and statistical procedure used. If the sample size was determined pragmatically, a sensitivity analysis should be reported to indicate the smallest direct or indirect effect that the final sample could detect with adequate power.

In the participant description, the manuscript states that students were recruited from “public and private secondary and upper-secondary schools in Mexico City” through multistage cluster sampling. However, the sampling procedure remains insufficiently reproducible. The authors should report the number of schools approached, the number that agreed to participate, the number of classrooms selected within each school, whether schools were stratified by public/private status or geographical area, and whether selection probabilities differed across clusters. Because students are nested within classrooms and schools, the authors should also discuss whether clustering was taken into account analytically; treating all 657 observations as statistically independent may underestimate standard errors if intraclass correlations are non-negligible.

In the ethics portion of the Study Design and Participants section, the text states that “The research procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing research involving human participants.” This wording is too general for a manuscript involving minors and assessment of depressive symptoms, including an item concerning thoughts of death or self-harm on the PHQ-9. The authors should identify the approving institutional ethics committee, approval number, and date, and specify the procedures used to obtain parental consent and adolescent assent. Most importantly, the manuscript should state what safeguarding protocol was followed when a participant endorsed the PHQ-9 self-harm/suicidality item, including whether school psychologists, parents, or clinical referral pathways were activated.

The Data Collection Tools section requires substantially greater attention to linguistic and cultural validation. For each instrument—the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, Children’s Response Styles Questionnaire, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, and PHQ-9—the manuscript should specify whether an established Mexican Spanish version was used. If instruments were translated specifically for this study, the authors should describe forward translation, back-translation, expert review, cognitive interviewing or pilot testing, and assessment of semantic equivalence. Because the study’s substantive conclusions depend on comparisons among latent psychological constructs measured in Spanish-speaking Mexican adolescents, evidence from English-language or other cultural versions alone is not sufficient.

In the description of the Children’s Response Styles Questionnaire, the manuscript states that “The rumination subscale consists of 13 items.” The authors should verify the exact version used and provide the original instrument citation, adaptation citation, scoring range, treatment of any reverse-coded items, and psychometric evidence specifically relevant to adolescents. The manuscript should also clarify whether rumination was conceptualized as a unitary construct or whether subdimensions such as brooding and reflection were considered. This distinction is theoretically important because maladaptive brooding may be more strongly related to depression than more reflective forms of repetitive thinking.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.