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The Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Peer Bullying Victimization in Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Parenting Styles

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sample-size justification in the sentence "Given that the conceptual model comprised 10 principal components, 25 participants were considered for each component" is not sufficiently rigorous for a structural equation modeling study. The authors should replace or supplement this rule-of-thumb approach with a formal power analysis or a sample-size justification based on expected effect size, number of free parameters, model complexity, desired statistical power, and alpha level. For mediation testing in particular, an a priori power analysis for indirect effects would strengthen the methodological justification.

The sampling description states that "10 upper-secondary schools were randomly selected from each of the two chosen districts" and that "two classes were randomly selected from each participating school." This multistage procedure should be described in greater operational detail. The manuscript should explain how the randomization was performed at each stage, whether schools were stratified by sex or school type, and how the final sample of exactly 250 participants was obtained from the selected classes. Because all students in selected classes were reportedly considered eligible, the authors should clarify whether more than 250 students were initially approached and, if so, how the final analytic sample was selected.

In the Findings section, the sentence “A total of 260 questionnaires had initially been completed” appears only in the assumptions paragraph and was not clearly explained in the Methods section. The manuscript should report participant flow systematically, including the number approached, number consenting, number completing questionnaires, number excluded due to univariate outliers, number excluded due to multivariate outliers, and final sample size. This should be described prospectively in Methods and then reported consistently in Findings.

The outlier procedure requires reconsideration. The manuscript states that “six cases exceeding the predetermined ±2.5 criterion” were removed as univariate outliers. A ±2.5 cutoff is relatively liberal and may result in unnecessary case deletion, particularly in psychological data where extreme but valid responses may be substantively meaningful. The authors should justify this threshold, identify which variables generated the outliers, and report whether sensitivity analyses were conducted with and without these cases. Case deletion should not be based solely on statistical extremity without evaluating data-entry errors, response patterns, or substantive plausibility.

The statement that “the absence of multivariate outliers” supported multivariate normality is methodologically inaccurate, particularly because four multivariate outliers were actually identified and removed. Mahalanobis distance is primarily a method for detecting multivariate outliers and does not, by itself, establish multivariate normality. The authors should assess multivariate normality using an appropriate index, such as Mardia’s multivariate skewness and kurtosis coefficients, and revise the assumptions paragraph accordingly.

Table 1 reports a very high correlation between permissive and authoritarian parenting (r = .72) and strong correlations between these parenting styles and peer victimization (r = .74 and r = .71, respectively). Although the reported VIF values are below conventional thresholds, the magnitude of these correlations warrants further discussion. The authors should examine discriminant validity among the parenting dimensions, especially if they are entered simultaneously as mediators, and discuss whether shared method variance or conceptual overlap may inflate the observed associations.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The demographic paragraph reports that the final sample included exactly 125 boys and 125 girls. Given the stated cluster sampling procedure, such an exact 50/50 distribution appears unusually balanced and requires clarification. The authors should state whether equal numbers of boys and girls were intentionally sampled, whether schools were sex-segregated and balanced by design, or whether this distribution occurred by chance. If balancing by sex was intentional, this should be described as part of the sampling strategy.

In the Study Design and Participants section, the sentence “Informed consent was obtained before participation” is incomplete for a study involving adolescents aged 15–18 years. The authors should specify whether written parental or guardian consent and adolescent assent were both obtained, particularly for participants younger than 18 years. The manuscript should also provide the name of the approving ethics committee, the ethics approval code, and a statement that the study complied with relevant ethical standards for research involving minors.

The data-collection procedure states that “the questionnaires were administered in group sessions in the selected classrooms, with the relevant forms also provided to parents where required by the data-collection procedure.” This wording is ambiguous, particularly because the parenting-style measure appears to assess adolescents’ perceptions of parenting rather than parent self-report. The authors should specify exactly which respondent completed each instrument, whether all three measures were completed by adolescents, and whether any parental questionnaire was actually administered. If no parent-report measure was used, the reference to forms distributed to parents should be removed.

In the description of the Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale, the sentence “The scale contains four dimensions” is appropriate, but the manuscript should specify which validated language version was used in this Iranian sample. The authors should report the translation and cultural adaptation process or cite the validated Persian version, describe evidence for construct

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validity in Iranian adolescents, and clarify whether the total score or the four subscale scores were used in the structural model. This is particularly important because the outcome appears to have been treated as a single observed variable.

The description of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire requires correction and greater psychometric precision. The sentence stating that items are rated "from never (0) to always (5)" is inconsistent with the conventional scoring of the 28-item Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, which typically uses a five-point frequency scale coded from 1 to 5. The authors should verify the scoring system used in the present study, explain whether any items were reverse scored, specify how subscale and total scores were calculated, and indicate whether minimization/denial items were included or excluded from the substantive score.

In the paragraph describing the Parenting Styles Questionnaire, the manuscript states that "the instrument was developed to assess patterns of parental influence and child-rearing practices through three major parenting styles." The authors should identify the exact instrument and original developer more explicitly, state whether adolescents rated their mother, father, or parents collectively, and explain the scoring range for each subscale. It is also important to clarify whether permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting were treated as three distinct observed mediators rather than indicators of a single latent construct.

The reliability reporting should be expanded beyond the sentence "Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .84" for the Parenting Styles Questionnaire. Because the mediation model uses the three parenting-style dimensions separately, reliability coefficients should be reported for permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting individually. Similarly, if childhood trauma was modeled using a total score, the authors should justify this approach given the multidimensional structure of the questionnaire, and if subscales were considered, their internal consistency should also be provided.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

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

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