






# Emotional Numbing as a Mediator Between Sexual Trauma and Relationship Dissatisfaction in Women

Andreea. Popescu<sup>1</sup>, Judith. Wanjiku<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health Psychology, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

<sup>2</sup> Department of Clinical Psychology, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

\* Corresponding author email address: judith.wanjiku@ku.ac.ke

| E d i t o r  | R e v i e w e r s   |
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| Mohsen Joshanloo <br>Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Keimyung University, 1095 Dalgubeol Boulevard, Dalseo-Gu, Daegu 42601, South Korea<br>mohsen.joshanloo@unimelb.edu.au | <b>Reviewer 1:</b> Zahra Yousefi <br>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. Email: Z.yousefi1393@khuif.ac.ir<br><b>Reviewer 2:</b> Mohsen Golparvar <br>Professor, Department of Psychology, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. mgolparvar@khuif.ac.ir |

## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The phrase “Among the constellation of trauma-related symptoms, emotional numbing...has been highlighted as particularly damaging...” would benefit from elaboration with concrete data or references detailing how damaging it is to relational outcomes, perhaps citing specific prevalence or effect size from existing literature.

The sentence “In contexts where emotional expression is culturally discouraged...” would benefit from integrating data on emotional expression norms specific to the Kenyan context, given your sample location.

You mention CAPS-5 items D6 and D7 were used, but it's unclear whether the full CAPS-5 was administered or just these items. Please clarify whether a full clinical interview was conducted or only specific components were extracted.

The section redundantly reports Table 1 data in the text. Instead of repeating means and SDs, discuss what the values imply in relation to clinical cutoffs or normative data if available.

Clarify whether correlations were tested one-tailed or two-tailed, as this influences significance thresholds in directional hypotheses.

While fit indices are excellent, the discussion does not address possible model misspecification or residuals. Were modification indices examined? If not, please state why.

The indirect effect of  $\beta = .22$  is meaningful but needs a discussion of whether it meets criteria for partial or full mediation (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986). Consider including the Sobel test or bootstrapped confidence intervals to bolster this claim.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The sentence “Sexual trauma is not only prevalent but uniquely impactful...” is conceptually strong but vague. Consider clarifying what is meant by “uniquely impactful” with comparative analysis (e.g., in contrast to physical abuse or emotional neglect).

The definition of emotional numbing needs further clarification. You mention it as “a pervasive inability to feel positive emotions...”—but some literature also includes diminished negative affect. Clarify this dual aspect or justify your narrowed focus.

The sentence “From a neurobiological standpoint...” should include references to specific studies or meta-analyses on neuroimaging findings that show altered amygdala or prefrontal activity in trauma survivors.

The use of the SES-SFV is appropriate, but the scoring method described (categorical classification) lacks clarity. What categories were participants placed into, and how were these used in SEM analysis, which typically requires continuous variables?

The paragraph notes the use of Mardia’s coefficient for multivariate normality but omits its critical threshold. Include the threshold used and a citation (e.g., Mardia, 1970) to support its application.

Add justification for using SEM over other mediation approaches like PROCESS or path analysis, especially given that only three observed variables were modeled.

The statement “This finding resonates with the notion that trauma affects not only how individuals think about relationships...” is insightful. However, it would be stronger with references to cognitive theories of trauma (e.g., Janoff-Bulman’s shattered assumptions theory).

The sentence “The psychological isolation brought on by trauma and exacerbated by emotional numbing...” is compelling but should be supported by references to empirical studies or meta-analyses linking isolation and relationship breakdown post-trauma.

When you mention “emotional numbing can serve as an internal wall...”, this metaphor is effective but informal. Consider rephrasing using more academic language, such as “an intrapsychic defense mechanism.”

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.