

A Causal Model of Parenting Stress Based on Child Behavioral Problems, Parental Perfectionism, Psychological Inflexibility, and Family Conflict: The Mediating Role of Parental Self-Compassion

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the paragraph beginning with “Parenting stress has emerged as one of the most important areas of inquiry...” provides a broad overview but lacks a clear theoretical framework linking all study variables. The authors should explicitly explain whether the proposed model is grounded in Family Systems Theory, the Stress Process Model, Acceptance and Commitment Theory, or another overarching framework to strengthen the conceptual coherence of the study.

The paragraph beginning “Recent studies have increasingly emphasized that parenting stress does not emerge in isolation...” identifies several risk factors but does not adequately explain why parental self-compassion was selected as the sole mediator rather than a moderator or an additional predictor. The theoretical rationale for positioning self-compassion as a mediator should be developed in greater depth.

In the Data Analysis section, the authors indicate that assumptions of multivariate analysis were assessed, but the procedures used are not described. The manuscript should explicitly report tests of multivariate normality, multicollinearity diagnostics (e.g., VIF values), and procedures used to identify influential observations.

The Findings section reports that missing data accounted for less than 2% and were handled using expectation-maximization. However, no evidence is provided that the missing data mechanism was Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) or Missing at Random (MAR). The authors should report the results of an appropriate missing-data diagnostic test.

In Table 1, the correlation between parenting stress and parental self-compassion is reported as $r = -.71$. Such a strong relationship raises concerns regarding potential conceptual overlap between constructs. The authors should discuss discriminant validity more explicitly and report whether the Fornell–Larcker criterion or HTMT ratios were examined.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The statement in the Introduction that “child behavioral problems constitute an important contextual stressor that may directly contribute to heightened parenting stress” would benefit from discussion of bidirectional effects. It is equally plausible that elevated parenting stress contributes to child behavioral difficulties. The manuscript currently presents a unidirectional interpretation without acknowledging reciprocal influences.

In the section describing parental perfectionism, the sentence “Parental perfectionism may contribute to parenting stress through several pathways” introduces an important construct; however, the manuscript does not specify whether self-oriented, socially prescribed, or other-oriented perfectionism is expected to be most relevant to parenting stress. Given that the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale contains distinct dimensions, the authors should justify their decision to use a global score rather than examining subscale-level effects.

The paragraph beginning “In addition to perfectionism, psychological inflexibility has emerged as a prominent predictor of emotional distress...” would be strengthened by explicitly linking psychological inflexibility to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) theory. Currently, the construct is discussed descriptively, but the underlying theoretical mechanisms remain underdeveloped.

The final paragraph of the Introduction identifies a research gap in Canadian families; however, no explanation is provided regarding why Canada offers a unique context for studying parenting stress. The authors should discuss relevant demographic, cultural, socioeconomic, or policy-related characteristics that distinguish Canadian parenting experiences from those reported in prior international studies.

In the Methods section, the sentence “Using a purposive sampling strategy... a total of 620 parents were recruited” raises concerns regarding representativeness. The authors should provide a more detailed description of recruitment procedures, response rates, participant flow, and the proportion of participants recruited from schools, community centers, organizations, and online platforms. Without this information, sampling bias cannot be adequately evaluated.

The paragraph describing participants indicates that parents were recruited from Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec, yet no provincial distribution statistics are reported. Given potential regional differences in parenting experiences, the authors should provide demographic breakdowns by province and consider whether geographic variation may have influenced the findings.

The statement “ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional research ethics committee” is insufficiently specific. The name of the ethics committee, approval number, and approval date should be reported to comply with contemporary reporting standards for human-subjects research.

The Measures section describes the Parenting Stress Index–Short Form and other instruments but reports only general psychometric properties from previous studies. The manuscript should also report Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and, where applicable, McDonald’s omega coefficients obtained from the current sample for each scale and subscale.

The description of the Self-Compassion Scale notes that it contains six components, yet the manuscript does not clarify whether self-compassion was modeled as a single latent factor or as a multidimensional construct in the SEM analyses. This distinction is particularly important because substantial debate exists regarding the factor structure of the SCS.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.