Modelling The Impact of Caregiving Burden on Psychological Distress with the Mediating Role of Social Support Among Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Sepideh. Shishehfar[1], Leila. Kashani Vahid[2], Samira. Vakili[3]*, Mohammadparsa. Azizi[2]

[1] PhD student, Department of Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
[3] Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

* **Corresponding author email address**: Vakili7sa@gmail.com

Editor	Reviewers
Zahra Yousefi	**Reviewer 1:** Fahime Bahonar
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Khorasgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. Email: yousefi1393@khuisf.ac.ir	Department of counseling, Universty of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Email: Fahime.bahonar@edu.ui.ac.ir
	Reviewer 2: Mahdi Khanjani
	Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. Email: khanjani_m@atu.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The abstract provides a good overview but could benefit from more detail on the sample size and key findings. Specifically, include the sample size of 354 mothers as well as the statistical significance levels (e.g., 'Results indicated that caregiving burden significantly predicts psychological distress ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$)')."

"The description of the study design mentions 'a descriptive correlational research design.' To enhance clarity, explain why this design was chosen and how it is suitable for addressing the research questions (e.g., 'This design was selected to explore the relationships between caregiving burden, social support, and psychological distress due to its ability to handle multiple variables and complex interactions')."

"The method section states 'selected via convenience sampling.' Explain why this sampling method was chosen and discuss potential biases it might introduce (e.g., 'Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may limit the generalizability of findings')."

the rationale behind using both SPSS-26 and AMOS-22 (e.g., 'SPSS-26 was used for preliminary data handling due to its robust handling of large datasets, while AMOS-22 was chosen for SEM due to its advanced modeling capabilities')."

"In Table 1, provide more context for the reported means and standard deviations (e.g., compare these to normative data or previous studies). This will help readers understand the severity or commonality of the reported scores."

"Table 2 is comprehensive but can be more reader-friendly by highlighting significant correlations. Use bold or asterisks to denote statistically significant values."

"The model fit indices (CFI, TLI, RMSEA) are mentioned but it would be beneficial to include a brief interpretation of what these indices signify (e.g., 'CFI and TLI values above 0.90 and RMSEA below 0.08 indicate a good fit')."

"While the limitations section is thorough, it can be expanded to include a discussion on potential response biases from self-report measures (e.g., 'Self-report measures may be subject to social desirability bias, which could affect the accuracy of reported caregiving burden and psychological distress')."

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2.   Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

"In the introduction, it is stated that 'Mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder show higher stress levels compared to mothers of children with other disabilities.' Adding specific statistical data or citations would strengthen this claim (e.g., 'Millaku (2023) found that stress levels were X% higher in mothers of children with ASD compared to other disabilities')."

"The literature review is comprehensive but lacks recent studies from the last 2-3 years. Including more current references (e.g., studies published after 2021) would ensure the review reflects the latest research trends."

"The inclusion criteria are well-defined but the exclusion criterion 'non-completion of questionnaires' is vague. Specify what percentage of incomplete responses led to exclusion and how this was managed."

"The description of the 'Psychological Distress' measure is thorough but lacks information on its cultural adaptation. If the Kessler scale was adapted for use in Iran, detail the process and validation results."

"The data analysis section provides sufficient detail but could be enhanced by explaining

"In Table 3, the significance of path coefficients is clear but explain the practical implications of these coefficients (e.g., 'A β of 0.19 for caregiving burden to psychological distress suggests a moderate positive effect')."

"Table 4 discusses indirect paths but lacks a discussion on the method used for bootstrap estimation. Explain the bootstrap method and why it was chosen for estimating indirect effects."

"The discussion effectively integrates findings with existing literature but can benefit from more critical analysis of discrepancies (e.g., 'Our findings differ from Lee et al. (2024), who found no mediating effect of social support. This may be due to differences in sample demographics or measurement tools')."

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2.   Revised

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