

A Structural Equation Analysis of Parental Psychological Control, Adolescent Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence, and Internalizing Symptoms


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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the paragraph discussing parental psychological control defines it as “manipulation of the adolescent’s emotional world through guilt induction, love withdrawal, invalidation, conditional approval, criticism, or pressure to conform to parental expectations.” This definition is useful, but the authors should distinguish psychological control more clearly from related constructs such as parental overprotection, harsh parenting, authoritarian parenting, and behavioral monitoring. Because these constructs may overlap conceptually, the manuscript should explain why psychological control is theoretically unique and why it is expected to predict internalizing symptoms through self-esteem and emotional intelligence.

In the Introduction, the statement that “parental psychological control may represent a less visible but developmentally powerful relational stressor” is conceptually important but underdeveloped. The authors should expand this section by explaining the mechanisms through which invisible or emotionally manipulative parenting practices become internalized by adolescents. For example, the manuscript could elaborate on autonomy frustration, contingent self-worth, emotional

suppression, shame, or impaired emotional awareness as mechanisms linking psychological control to internalizing symptoms. This would improve the theoretical coherence of the proposed mediation model.

In the Introduction, the paragraph on self-esteem states that “self-esteem becomes especially important because young people are simultaneously negotiating parental expectations, peer comparison, academic performance, bodily changes, and increasing independence.” This is a strong sentence, but the manuscript should more explicitly explain whether self-esteem is conceptualized as an outcome of parenting, a mediator, a protective factor, or all three. At present, the introduction refers to self-esteem in several roles, but the hypothesized position of self-esteem within the structural model should be stated more directly before the aim of the study.

In the Data Collection Tools section, the authors describe the Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, and Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale. However, the manuscript should provide more detail on how each scale was scored in the present study. The authors should specify the number of items retained, response ranges, whether total or subscale scores were used, whether any items were reverse scored, and how higher scores were interpreted. This would improve methodological transparency and allow readers to understand exactly how latent indicators were constructed for the SEM.

In the Data Collection Tools section, the authors state that previous studies support the reliability and validity of each instrument, but the psychometric evidence should be tied more directly to the present sample. The manuscript reports Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and AVE in Table 1, which is useful; however, the authors should also report confirmatory factor loadings for the indicators used in this study, either in the text, table, or supplementary material. Because the study relies on latent variable modeling, evidence for the measurement quality of each construct in the Canadian adolescent sample is essential.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, emotional intelligence is described as “the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions in oneself and others.” However, the manuscript should justify why emotional intelligence is modeled after self-esteem in the sequential pathway rather than being modeled as a parallel mediator only. The authors report a path from self-esteem to emotional intelligence in the findings, but the theoretical rationale for this ordering needs to be strengthened in the introduction. The authors should explain why adolescents with lower self-esteem would be expected to have weaker emotional intelligence and how this sequence differs from alternative models in which emotional intelligence predicts self-esteem.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the authors state that “fewer studies integrate these constructs into a single structural model.” This claim is plausible, but it should be made more precise. The authors should identify exactly what gap is being addressed: whether the novelty lies in the Canadian adolescent sample, the simultaneous inclusion of self-esteem and emotional intelligence, the sequential mediation model, or the use of structural equation modeling. Without this clarification, the contribution of the study remains somewhat broad and could be perceived as incremental rather than theoretically distinctive.

In the Methods and Materials section, the Study Design and Participants paragraph states that the study used “a cross-sectional, correlational research design using Structural Equation Modeling.” The authors should clarify that structural equation modeling in a cross-sectional design does not establish causality or temporal precedence. Although SEM allows the testing of theoretically directional pathways, the wording throughout the manuscript should avoid implying causal effects unless the authors explicitly acknowledge that the paths represent statistically estimated associations. Terms such as “influence,” “effect,” and “contributes to” should be used cautiously or replaced with “was associated with” where appropriate.

In the Study Design and Participants paragraph, the authors report that adolescents were recruited from “public secondary schools across the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, Canada,” but the sampling procedure requires more detail. The

manuscript should specify the number of school districts, the number of schools, the approximate number of classrooms, and whether urban and suburban schools were proportionally represented. Because school-based sampling can introduce clustering effects, the authors should also clarify whether the nested structure of students within classrooms or schools was considered statistically or whether intraclass correlations were examined.

In the Study Design and Participants paragraph, the authors state that “of the distributed questionnaires, 642 were returned, and after eliminating incomplete responses and questionnaires exhibiting excessive missing data or patterned responding, a final sample of 618 adolescents was retained.” This is helpful, but the authors should report the initial number of eligible students approached, the response rate, the exclusion rate, and the criteria used to define “excessive missing data” and “patterned responding.” These details are important for assessing selection bias, data quality, and the reproducibility of the sample cleaning process.

In the Methods section, the sentence “Students with documented severe cognitive impairments or psychiatric conditions that substantially limited questionnaire completion were excluded” needs clarification. The authors should explain how such conditions were identified, who made the determination, and whether this exclusion criterion was based on school records, parent report, teacher report, or self-report. This is particularly important because the outcome variable involves internalizing symptoms; excluding adolescents with severe psychiatric conditions may reduce clinical variability and should be acknowledged as a potential limitation.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.