The Structural Model of Identity Instability Based on Object Relations and Childhood Trauma with the Mediating Role of Mental Pain

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning "Identity instability refers to a state in which an individual or group of individuals experiences ambiguity…", the construct is introduced descriptively but lacks theoretical anchoring. Please explicitly situate "identity instability" within established frameworks (e.g., Eriksonian identity theory or contemporary dimensional models) before moving to empirical associations.

The sentence "Studies have shown that 17% of adolescents, 13% of adults, and 6% of adults over 25…" would benefit from clarification regarding time frame (lifetime vs. point prevalence) and geographical context, as prevalence rates vary widely across cultures.

The Data Analysis section reports the use of SPSS 28 and SmartPLS 3, whereas earlier sections mention SPSS 26 and AMOS 18. This inconsistency must be corrected and the analytical pipeline clearly described.

The paragraph reporting Kolmogorov–Smirnov results would benefit from a brief justification of why parametric assumptions were tested, particularly if SEM estimation relied on maximum likelihood.

In Table 2, correlations are moderate to high (e.g., r = 0.649). Please discuss potential shared variance and how multicollinearity concerns were addressed beyond VIF reporting.

In Table 3, CFI is reported as 0.88, below the stated acceptable threshold (>0.90). The paragraph concluding that "none of the indices had weak values" should be revised to acknowledge this limitation more transparently.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph starting "Given what has been stated about the relationship and impact of object relations and childhood trauma…", the manuscript asserts a research gap. Please strengthen this claim by explicitly stating what existing models fail to explain and how the present model advances theory beyond additive effects.

Mental pain is introduced across two adjacent paragraphs, including extensive conceptual elaboration (Cassell, suffering, meaning crisis). Consider condensing and integrating these paragraphs to improve narrative flow and avoid redundancy.

In the sentence "Using a non-random purposive sampling method…", please justify why purposive sampling was methodologically appropriate and discuss how selection bias was mitigated, particularly given the clinical sensitivity of self-injurious behavior.

The manuscript does not explicitly state ethical approval, parental consent procedures, or safeguards for adolescents reporting self-injurious behaviors. Please add a dedicated paragraph detailing ethical clearance and participant protection.

In the IIS description, the sentence "this questionnaire was normed for the first time on an Iranian student population by the present researcher" is important. Please report factor structure confirmation, translation/back-translation procedures, and cultural adaptation steps.

The ISAS is described in detail, yet self-injury is not modeled as a variable in SEM. Please clarify whether ISAS scores were used only for screening or if they contributed analytically to the model.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

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