Teacher–Student Interaction Quality and Academic Motivation in Neurodivergent Learners: The Mediating Role of Social Relatedness

Vladimir. Pelc[1], Marit. Erves[2], Aleksander. Ternar[2*]

[1] University of Primorska, Faculty of Education, Slovenia
[2] Faculty of Education, University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia

* Corresponding author email address: Ternar@um.si

Editor	Reviewers
Abolghasem Yaghoobi Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran yaghoobi@basu.ac.ir	**Reviewer 1:** Fahime Bahonar Department of counseling, Universty of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Email: Fahime.bahonar@edu.ui.ac.ir **Reviewer 2:** Davood Taghvaei Department of Psychology, Arak Branch, Islamic Azad University, Arak, Iran. Email: d-taghvaeii@iau-arak.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

While Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is appropriately cited, the paragraph would benefit from explicitly stating how SDT directly informs the study hypotheses or mediation model.

The sentence "...motivational processes operate for these students is not only of theoretical importance but also a social and educational necessity" is compelling. However, supporting this with data (e.g., dropout rates, motivational disparities) would strengthen its empirical grounding.

This paragraph could be strengthened by summarizing the theoretical mechanisms through which social relatedness functions as a mediator, rather than only citing empirical findings.

Consider reporting the Cronbach's alpha from your study rather than relying solely on previous research, to demonstrate internal reliability within your sample.

This point about pandemic-related shifts is important but underdeveloped. Consider elaborating how remote learning environments uniquely affect neurodivergent students' relational needs.

This is a key theoretical integration. However, it would benefit from differentiating between the needs of ADHD vs. autistic learners regarding social relatedness, as previously mentioned in the intro.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

While you report normality, linearity, and multicollinearity diagnostics, the method for assessing multivariate normality (critical for SEM) is not discussed. Please clarify.

The SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Residual), although mentioned in the method, is missing from the table. Please include it for consistency and full reporting of SEM fit.

The presentation of both unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) coefficients is commendable. However, consider adding effect size interpretation (e.g., small, moderate, large effects) to help readers gauge practical significance.

You may enhance this interpretation by briefly discussing why the mediation was partial and what other mediators might explain the residual direct path from interaction to motivation.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2.   Revised

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