

# The Relationship Between the School Social-Emotional Climate and Student Bullying Through the Mediating Variable of Alexithymia


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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction section, the paragraph beginning with “Bullying is recognized as one of the most pervasive and harmful psychosocial problems...” provides a broad conceptual overview of bullying, but it lacks sufficient differentiation between traditional bullying and cyberbullying mechanisms. Because several cited studies focus specifically on cyberbullying, the manuscript should clarify whether the theoretical assumptions underlying traditional bullying are fully transferable to digital contexts, or whether these constructs require conceptual separation.

The paragraph beginning with “School represents one of the primary social environments...” defines school social-emotional climate in a relatively broad manner; however, the manuscript does not adequately explain how the four dimensions of the employed instrument (acceptance, support, structure, autonomy) theoretically map onto bullying reduction mechanisms. A more explicit theoretical justification linking each dimension to emotional development and aggression inhibition is needed.

The sentence “A positive school climate fosters emotional security, social connectedness, empathy, and adaptive coping strategies...” would benefit from a stronger theoretical grounding. Specifically, the authors should integrate a formal

developmental or ecological framework such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory or attachment-informed school climate models to support the proposed causal pathways.

The "Measures" section contains a detailed description of the Illinois Bullying Scale; however, the manuscript does not specify whether the total bullying score or specific subscales were used in the SEM analysis. Since bullying, fighting, and victimization are conceptually distinct constructs, the analytical treatment of these dimensions should be clarified.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning with "Although environmental factors such as school climate play a significant role...", alexithymia is introduced as a "multidimensional personality construct," yet the manuscript later treats it as a mediating emotional process influenced by contextual variables. The authors should clarify whether alexithymia is conceptualized here as a relatively stable personality trait or as a context-sensitive emotional-processing deficit, because this distinction has important implications for mediation modeling.

The paragraph discussing empathy deficits and impaired social cognition ("Another important aspect of alexithymia is its association with empathy deficits...") is conceptually valuable; however, the manuscript does not explain why empathy itself was excluded from the structural model despite being repeatedly discussed as a theoretically central variable. The omission of empathy creates a conceptual gap between the literature review and the tested model.

The final paragraph of the Introduction appropriately states the study aim; however, the manuscript does not explicitly formulate research hypotheses. Given the use of Structural Equation Modeling, the article would benefit substantially from a dedicated hypothesis section specifying expected directional relationships among school climate, alexithymia, and bullying.

In the "Study Design and Participants" subsection, the authors report that G\*Power was used to estimate the sample size, yet no information is provided regarding the assumed effect size, statistical power level, alpha level, or model complexity used in the calculation. This omission limits the reproducibility and methodological transparency of the sampling procedure.

The statement "The sampling method employed in this study was systematic random sampling" requires additional clarification. Specifically, the manuscript should explain how schools and classrooms were selected, how the ordered list was constructed, and whether clustering effects were considered. Since students are nested within schools, ignoring clustering may bias standard errors and inflate significance estimates.

The paragraph describing data collection procedures mentions that questionnaires were completed "both in person and through an online link." The authors should discuss whether measurement equivalence between paper-based and online administration was examined. Mixed-mode administration can introduce response-style bias and may affect the psychometric consistency of self-report measures.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.