Childhood Emotional Maltreatment and Problematic Social Media Use Among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Body Image Dissatisfaction

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## Sample

A total of 385 adolescent social media users, aged between 14 and 18 years (Mage = 15.62 years, SD = 1.00, 57% female), participated in the study. Participants were recruited from a high school in a north-western region of Turkey. The inclusion criterion for participation in the study was having an active social media account.

# Abstract

Preliminary evidence suggests that childhood maltreatment is associated with higher problematic social media use (PSMU). It has also been established that childhood emotional maltreatment (CEM) is associated with body image dissatisfaction (BID). However, the direct and indirect impacts of CEM on PSMU via BID remain untested. The present study examined these direct and indirect relationships among a sample of 385 adolescents (mean age 15.62 years, range 14–18 years). Results indicated that female adolescents had higher levels of CEM, BID, and PSMU compared to males. Structural equation modeling indicated that CEM was indirectly associated with PSMU via BID among males. However, only BID was positively associated with PSMU among females. The findings are in accordance with theoretical models suggesting that individuals’ core characteristics including early childhood experiences and psychopathological factors are associated with different types of specific internet-use disorders.

# Outcome

The present study examined a potential mediational pathway between CEM and PSMU in a sample of adolescents, and separately according to gender. CEM was indirectly associated with PSMU via BID among males, although only BID, but not CEM, had a significant effect on PSMU among females. The present study supported the proposition that PSMU may constitute a maladaptive coping strategy to cope with emotional trauma and body dissatisfaction (adolescent boys) or body dissatisfaction (adolescent girls). This indicates that PSMU is directly or indirectly related to both CEM and BID only in male adolescents. This finding suggests that male and female adolescents appear to cope with their adverse childhood experiences differently. (Kircaburun, 2020, p.1542)