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Perceived Parenting Styles and Cyberbullying Victimization in Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

Ergenlerde Algılanan Ebeveynlik Stilleri ve Siber Zorbalık Mağduriyeti: Benlik Saygısının Aracı Rolü

M. Furkan Kurnaz[1]

[1]Asst. Prof. Dr., Necmettin Erbakan University, Ereğli Faculty of Education, Konya, Türkiye

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M. Furkan Kurnaz

Toros Mahallesi, Üniversite Caddesi. No:10, 42310 Ereğli/Konya

furkan.kurnaz.mfk@gmail.com

Abstract: In this study, the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between adolescents' perceived parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization was examined. The study included 257 adolescents aged 13 to 17. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to examine the structural validity of perceived parenting styles among adolescents. Two different mediation models were tested to examine the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between adolescents' perceived parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization. All analyses was performed using the JASP. The findings showed that parenting styles of acceptance by both mothers and fathers improved adolescents' self-esteem, but decreased their cyberbullying victimization. But, perceived controlling parenting styles did not significantly predict both self-esteem and cyberbullying victimization. Moreover, it was found that adolescents' self-esteem plays a mediating role in the relationship between acceptance parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization. However, adolescents' self-esteem does not mediate the relationship between parents' controlling parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization. These findings highlight the protective role of an acceptance-based parenting approach in enhancing adolescents' self-esteem and reducing cyberbullying victimization, and underscore the importance of supportive parenting behaviors in digital contexts.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Self-Esteem, Cyberbullying Victimization, Adolescents, Multicategorical Simple Mediation Model.

Öz: Bu çalışmada, ergenlerin algıladıkları ebeveynlik stilleri ve siber zorbalık mağduriyeti arasındaki ilişkide benlik saygılarının aracı rolü incelenmiştir. Çalışmaya yaşları 13 ile 17 arasında değişen 257 ergen katılmıştır. Algılanan ebeveynlik stillerinin ergenlerdeki yapısal geçerliğini incelemek için doğrulayıcı faktör analizleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ergenlerin algıldıkları ebeveynlik stilleri ve siber zorbalık mağduriyeti arasındaki ilişkide benlik saygısının aracı rolünü incelemek için iki farklı aracılık modeli gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tüm analizler JASP kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bulgular hem annelerin hem de babaların kabul edici ebeveynlik tarzlarının ergenlerin benlik saygılarını artırdığını, ancak siber zorbalık mağduriyetlerini azalttığını göstermiştir. Fakat ebeveyn kontrolü ebeveynlik stilleri benlik saygısını ve siber zorbalık mağduriyetini anlamlı bir şekilde yordamamaktadır. Ayrıca, ergenlerin benlik saygısının ebeveyn kabulü ebeveynlik stilleri ile siber zorbalık mağduriyeti arasındaki ilişkide aracı rol oynadığı görülmüştür. Ancak ebeveynlerin kontrol ebeveynlik stilleri ile siber zorbalık mağduriyeti arasındaki ilişkiye ergenlerin benlik saygıları aracılık etmemektedir. Bu bulgular, kabul temelli ebeveynlik yaklaşımının ergenlerin benlik saygısını artırmada ve siber zorbalık mağduriyetini azaltmada koruyucu rolünü vurgulamakta ve dijital bağlamlarda destekleyici ebeveyn davranışlarının öneminin altını çizmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ebeveynlik Stilleri, Benlik-Saygısı, Siber Zorbalık Mağduriyeti, Ergenler, Çok Kategorili Basit Aracılık Modeli

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Introduction

Parenting has long been a focal point of scholarly inquiry across diverse disciplines, particularly within the social sciences. Conceptually, parenting is defined as multidimensional construct encompassing the enduring attitudes and behaviors of parents exhibit toward their children (Smetana, 2017). These attitudes often vary based on individual differences, manifesting as distinct parenting styles, which defined as the emotional climate and range of behaviors parents utilize during child-rearing (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), fundamentally grounded in levels of control and acceptance (Yaffe, 2017).

For decades, the impact of parenting styles on adolescent development has been heavily emphasized (e.g., Baumrind, 1971, 1991). Empirical evidence suggests these styles are significant predictors of adolescents well-being (Francis et al., 2021), drag abuse identification (Liu et al., 2022), patterns of Internet use (Ren & Zhu, 2022), and self-efficacy (Shengyao et al., 2024). Furthermore, the literature increasingly highlights the influence of parenting styles on both traditional bullying (He et al., 2023) and cyberbullying (Broll & Reynolds, 2021) behaviors.

Recently, researchers have shifted focus toward identifying mediating variables that may amplify the positive effects of parenting styles or mitigate their negative consequences. For instance, prior research indicates that adolescents' perceptions of parenting style mediate the relationship between learning and parental involvement (Kou, 2022).Other studies have identified self-esteem as a key mediator between parenting and various outcomes, such as crisis management (Zhao et al., 2023) and externalizing problems, including aggressive behavior (Szkody et al., 2021).However, because much of the existing research on self-esteem as a mediator has focused on emerging adults, there remains a critical gap in understanding how self-esteem functions specifically within adolescent cyberbullying context.

Parenting Styles and Cyberbullying Victimization

Parenting styles are defined by the behaviors children observe and internalize, encompassing daily decision-making, conflict resolution, expectation management, and rule enforcement (Salavera et al., 2022). Ideally, parents provide their children with environments and stimuli aligned with these styles to help them achieve developmental goals set by adults (Baumrind, 1978). Classic literature identifies three primary parenting styles: (a) authoritarian, which focuses on shaping and

controlling children's behavior; (b) permissive, characterized by an acceptance of the child's impulses, infrequent punishment, and high levels of self-regulation; and (c) authoritative, wherein parents demand mature behavior and enforce rules through consistent consequences while simultaneously supporting independence and foster open communication (Baumrind, 1971; Dornbusch et al., 1987).

Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) refined this model by identifying two fundamental dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness. Subsequent research by Steinberg et al. (1992; 2013) further clarified that parental acceptance, supervision, and autonomy support constitute responsiveness, while firm control constitutes demandingness. Consequently, parenting styles serve as a critical framework for researchers investigating developmental outcomes across various life stage (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In this context, Katz et al. (2019) concluded that parenting styles are significantly associated with adolescents involvement in cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is defined as repeated and aggressive behavior toward victims using digital tools in online environments with the intent to harm others (Tokunaga, 2010). The most fundamental characteristics that distinguish cyberbullying from other aggressive behaviors include repetition and power imbalance (Slonje et al., 2013). According to the WHO'(2024) study, which across 44 different countries, revealed that around 12% of adolescents participating in the study reported perpetrating cyberbullying, while 15% reported experiencing cyberbullying victimization. Given the prevalence, researchers have investigated various causal factors, with meta-analyses specifically examining the link between parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization; these studies consistently report that parental influence is a significant predictor of adolescent experiences in digital spaces (Chu & Zhen, 2025; Grama et al., 2024).

Research on cyberbullying and family environments has predominantly focused on perpetrators, while limited attention has been paid to the victims (Ma et al., 2025; Shao et al., 2023). However, existing studies suggest that different parenting styles can either mitigate or exacerbate the risk of victimization. Specifically, parenting characterized by high, rigid control may increase the likelihood of victimization (Martínez et al., 2018), whereas an acceptance parenting style serves as a protective factor (Chu & Chen, 2024; El-Sayed et al., 2025). Therefore, investigating the relationship between parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization is essential to elucidating the underlying mechanisms of these behaviors and providing a theoretical foundation for targeted intervention strategies.

The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem and cyberbullying share a bidirectional relationship. A systematic review examining this link emphasized that high self-esteem is effective in reducing cyberbullying involvement; conversely, engagement in cyberbullying behaviors often results in a subsequent decrease in adolescents self-esteem (Agustiningsih et al., 2024). In this context, self-esteem, which is how a person assesses their own value (Orth & Robins, 2022), can serve as a critical protective factor against cyberbullying behaviors. Furthermore, empirical research has established that self-esteem often functions as a mediator between various family-related variables and adolescent cyberbullying. Specifically, studies have identified this mediating role in relation to perceived social support from family (Wu et al., 2025), parental phubbing (Kurnaz, 2026), family cohesion (Xiao et al., 2025), parental conflict (He et al., 2024), and general parenting styles (Garaigordobil & Navarro, 2022; Kim et al., 2024).

The Current Study

Adolescence entails the psychological differentiation of individuals from their families, leading to subsequent shifts in household roles and dynamics. In alignment with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, parental approaches toward adolescents play a pivotal role in their developmental trajectories (Tudge & Rosa, 2026). Family dynamics are fundamental during this period; supportive environments—characterized by cohesion and adaptability—serve as protective factors against mental health issues (Demetriou, 2025). Conversely, elements such as differential parental treatment, authoritarian control, and chronic family conflict can exacerbate psychological vulnerabilities (Arslan et al., 2024; Pinherio et al., 2017).

Turkish parents often prioritize discipline and culturally appropriate behaviors; within this collectivist context, authoritarian parenting styles may be perceived as culturally normative (Dost-Gözkan, 2022; Uslucan, 2009). Empirical studies involving Turkish adolescents indicate that while emotional warmth and supportive behaviors are linked to improved mental health and academic achievement (e.g., Cenk & Demir, 2016), strict discipline—despite aligning with certain cultural norms—is frequently associated with negative outcomes, such as increased anxiety symptoms (e.g., Sen Aslan et al., 2025). Consequently, there is a clear need for further research focusing on the specific impact of parental attitudes on the developmental outcomes of Turkish adolescents.

When evaluating parenting styles as a whole, it is evident that differences may exist between maternal and paternal approaches, leading to varying reflections in adolescent outcomes. Research findings indicate that the relationship between parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization differs depending on whether maternal or paternal styles are examined (Garaigordobil& Navarro, 2022; Liu & Hoi, 2025; Safari & Ariani, 2024). Furthermore, the direction of the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and various associated variables (e.g., narcissism, Calaresi et al., 2025) has been shown to shift based on the parent's gender. Similarly, studies demonstrate that the link between parenting styles and self-esteem also fluctuates between maternal and paternal influences (Cheng et al., 2025; Milevsky et al., 2007). In this context, when investigating the mediating role of self-esteem, examining maternal and paternal styles separately may yield more distinct and nuanced results.

Prior research by Garaigordobil and Navarro (2022) highlighted that the connection between parenting styles and adolescents cyberbullying is partially explained by their self-esteem. However, that study utilized linear regression to examine this mediating role. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) identified self-esteem as a factor explaining the link between child-rearing practices and cyberbullying. In contrast, the current study utilizes two distinct mediation models to explore the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between parenting styles (both maternal and paternal, respectively) and cyberbullying victimization. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1.Self-esteem mediates the relationship between maternal acceptance and cyberbullying victimization.

H1a.Maternal acceptance positively predicts adolescents' self-esteem.

H1b. Self-esteem negatively predicts cyberbullying victimization in Model 1.
H1c. Maternal acceptance negatively predicts cyberbullying victimization.
H2. Maternal control predicts cyberbullying victimization, mediated by self-esteem.
H2a. Maternal control negatively predicts adolescents' self-esteem.
H2b. Maternal control positively predicts cyberbullying victimization.
H3. Self-esteem mediates the relationship between paternal acceptance and cyberbullying victimization.
H3a. Paternal acceptance positively predicts adolescents' self-esteem.
H3b. Self-esteem negatively predicts cyberbullying victimization in Model 2.
H3c. Paternal acceptance negatively predicts cyberbullying victimization.
H4. Paternal control predicts cyberbullying victimization, mediated by self-esteem
H4a. Paternal control negatively predicts adolescents' self-esteem.
H4b. Paternal control positively predicts cyberbullying victimization.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The Ethics Committee for Scientific Research in Social and Human Sciences at Necmettin Erbakan University (Report Number: 2025/743) provided ethical approval before the study's initiation. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education gave approval for data gathering (Report Number: MEB.TT.2025.029726.01). A convenience sampling method was employed for the selection of the study group, which consisted of students from three high schools in Konya, Türkiye. Data collection was conducted within the classroom environment during regular school hours, facilitated by three professional school counselors using a paper-and-pencil format. To ensure sample diversity, the recruitment process targeted students across various grade levels and socio-economic backgrounds. All participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, and measures were taken to ensure both voluntary participation and the anonymity of the responses.

Data analysis did not included eight adolescents because they left one or more variables blank by more than 50%. Additionally, nine outliers were removed, leading to a total of 257 adolescents in the final sample. Of the participants, 56.8% were female (n = 146) and 43.2% were male (n = 111) were male. Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 17 (M = 15.23). Regarding grade level, 38.5% of participants were in ninth grade (n = 99), 27.2% were in tenth grade (n = 70), 26.8% were in eleventh grade (n = 69), and 7.4% were in twelfth grade (n = 19). Furthermore, the vast majority of participants (86.4%, n = 222) reported middle socioeconomic status (SES), while 11.7% (n = 30) reported high SES, and 1.9% (n = 5) had low SES.

Measures

Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory II (RCBI-II)

The RCBI-II, which separately assesses 10 items for cyberbullying victimization and cyberbullying perpetration, was revised by Topçu and Erdur-Baker (2018). Only the cyberbullying victimization form was used in this study. In the original validation study, the cyberbullying victimization form of the RCBI-II demonstrated acceptable levels of goodness-of-fit indices (TLI = .91, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .06). The internal consistency reliability of the cyberbullying victimization dimension in the original form is α = .80. The reliability coefficients for the cyberbullying victimization form in this study were high (ω = .85; α = .82).

Parenting Styles Questionnaire

The scale developed by Sümer and Güngör (1999) assesses individuals' perceptions of parental attitudes through a self-report format. The scale consists of 22 items, which are evaluated separately for mothers and fathers. Eleven items measure parental acceptance, and the remaining 11 items measure parental strict control. Three items in the scale are reverse-coded, and total scores for each dimension range from 11 to 55. Although factor structure was tested among university students, its applicability to adolescents has been supported by previous studies (e.g., Karakayli & Topkaya, 2025; Özen, 2006).

In the present sample, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted separately for both forms of scale. For the mother, the goodness-of-fit indices were at a good fit ($\chi 2/df$ = 2.15, p < .001; [CFI = .952; TLI = .946; GFI = .954; RMSEA = .067]), while for the father, the indices indicated an acceptable fit ($\chi 2/df$ = 3.39, p < .001; [CFI = .902; TLI = .891; GFI = .934; RMSEA = .097]). Furthermore, in this study, ω = .910 and α = .907 were found for the acceptance dimension and ω = .832 and α = .828 for the control dimension in mother form. Similarly, for father, ω = .910 and α = .908 were found for the acceptance dimension, and ω = .789 and α = .788 were found for the control dimension.

Short-Form State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES-S)

The SSES-S, shortened by Brito et al. (2023), was examined for validity in Turkish adolescents by Kurnaz and Koçtürk (2026). The 12-item SSES-S consists of three dimensions. In the original validation study, the SSES-S demonstrated good model fit indices ($\chi 2/df$ = 1.88, p < .001; [CFI = .943; TLI = .927; GFI = .931; RMSEA = .064]). The authors reported acceptable reliability levels for the subscales as ω = .728 and α = .712 for the academic performance dimension, ω = .697 and α = .688 for the physical appearance dimension, and ω = .798 and α = .793 for the social success dimension. This study showed good internal consistency in the total scale score (ω = .810; α = .812).

Data Analysis

In the study, CFA, descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and multicategorical simple mediation model analyses for parenting styles were performed using JASP (0.95.2). To test the hypothesized relationships, the study employed path analysis as the analysis utilized observed variables and total scores. This approach involved testing two distinct mediation models to examine the mediating role of self-esteem. Specifically, Model 1 investigated the relationship between maternal parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization, while Model 2 focused on the relationship between paternal parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization.

The z value was computed to assess the significance of the direct and indirect effects, where values exceeding ± 1.96 were interpreted as statistically significant at the.05 level (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, p. 718). Furthermore, bootstrap sampling with 1000 replications was employed to examine the 95% confidence intervals (CIs) of the paths. An effect was considered statistically significant if zero was not contained within the CI (Hayes, 2018).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations of variables in multicategorical simple mediation model

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*S*	*K*	1	2	3	4	5	6
PSM-Acceptance	42.70	10.14	–0.912	0.063	–					
PSM-Control	29.96	9.00	0.328	–0.385	–.387***	–				
PSF-Acceptance	39.36	11.01	–0.592	0.303	.702***	–.282***	–			
PSF-Control	27.72	8.44	0.719	0.380	–.175**	.585***	–.276***	–		
Self-Esteem	41.33	8.20	–0.251	–0.298	.250***	–.170**	.237***	–.176**	–	
CV	14.73	5.20	1.071	0.279	–.272***	.170**	–.294***	.188**	–.262***	–

Note. ***p< .001; **p< .01; *p< .05; N = 257; PSM-Acceptance: Mother Parenting Style-Acceptance; PSM-Control: Mother Parenting Style-Control; PSF-Acceptance: Father Parenting Style-Acceptance; PSF-Control: Father Parenting Style-Control; CV: Cyberbullying Victimization; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; S: Skewness; K: Kurtosis.*

Table 2. Multicollinearity, reliability, and validity

Variables	Multicollinearity		Reliability		Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio					
	TV	VIF	ω	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
PSM-Acceptance	0.815	1.227	.910	.907	–					
PSM-Control	0.845	1.184	.832	.828	.382	–				
PSF-Acceptance	0.887	1.128	.910	.908	.737	.224	–			
PSF-Control	0.911	1.098	.789	.789	.260	.633	.348	–		
Self-Esteem	0.931	1.075	.810	.812	.239	.206	.231	.208	–	
CV	–	–	.854	.815	.251	.227	.264	.257	.283	–

Note. PSM-Acceptance: Mother Parenting Style-Acceptance; PSM-Control: Mother Parenting Style-Control; PSF-Acceptance: Father Parenting Style-Acceptance; PSF-Control: Father Parenting Style-Control; CV: Cyberbullying Victimization; TV: Tolerance Value, VIF: Variance Inflation Factor; ω: McDonald's Omega; α: Cronbach's Alpha.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Eight participants who left 50% or more of the items blank at any scale were excluded from the dataset. Subsequently, boxplots were examined to identify potential outliers in the data, and nine cases were removed. The analyses were then conducted with a final sample of 257 adolescents. Skewness and kurtosis were used to evaluate normality; variables were normally distributed (see Table 1).

Preliminary analyses of the correlations between variables were conducted, and the results are summarized in Table 1. In general, positive correlations were observed between acceptance-based parenting styles (both maternal and paternal) and self-esteem, whereas negative correlations were found between these acceptance-based styles and both control-oriented parenting and cyberbullying victimization. Conversely, control-oriented parenting styles were found to be positively associated with cyberbullying victimization and negatively associated with self-esteem. Furthermore, a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and cyberbullying victimization was identified. All specific correlation coefficients and significance levels are presented in Table 1.

Prior to testing the models, multicollinearity was assessed using VIF, TV, and the Durbin-Watson. The TV values were between 0.815 and 0.931, while the VIF values were between 1.075 and 1.227. The Durbin-Watson was 1.60 for Model 1 and 1.67 for Model 2. These values indicate that there was no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2009). Finally, discriminant validity was supported based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios for the variables included in the models (Gold et al., 2001; see Table 2).

Multicategorical Simple Mediation Models

According to the mediation analysis results, perceived maternal acceptance parenting style (PSM-Acceptance) positively predicted self-esteem (*B* =.176, 95% CI [.076,.275]) and negatively predicted cyberbullying victimization (*B* = –.102, 95% CI [–.170, –.033]). In contrast, perceived maternal control parenting style (PSM-Control) did not significantly predict either self-esteem or cyberbullying victimization. Similarly, perceived paternal acceptance parenting style (PSF-Acceptance) positively predicted self-esteem (*B* =.152, 95% CI [.054,.250]) and negatively predicted cyberbullying victimization (*B* = –.105, 95% CI [–.162, –.048]). Perceived paternal control parenting style (PSF-Control) did not significantly predict either self-esteem or cyberbullying victimization. Furthermore, self-esteem negatively predicted cyberbullying victimization in both Model 1 (*B* = –.128, 95% CI [–.200, –.057]) and Model 2 (*B* = –.122, 95% CI [–.195, –.049]).

Mediation Analyses Results

Results from the mediation analyses indicated that self-esteem partially mediated the relationship between PSM-Acceptance and cyberbullying victimization (*B* = –.023,%95 CI [–.040, –.005]), as well as the relationship between PSF-Acceptance and cyberbullying victimization (*B* = –.019,%95 CI [–.034, –.003]). Conversely, self-esteem did not mediate the relationships between either PSM-Control or PSF-Control and cyberbullying victimization. The full results of these analyses are detailed in Table 3, Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Discussion

This study investigated how self-esteem mediates the relationship between adolescents' perception of their parents' parenting styles and cyberbullying victimization. In line with the simple mediation models, both maternal and paternal acceptance styles were statistically significant predictors through self-esteem in the negative prediction of cyberbullying victimization (supporting H1 and H3). Conversely, neither maternal nor paternal controlling styles functioned as significant predictors (rejecting H2 and H4).According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, the "acceptance" parenting style within the adolescent's microsystem serves as

Table 3. Direct and indirect effects

H	Effects	Paths	*B*	*z*-value	*p*	*CI*
	Direct Effects					
H1a		PSM-A – > Self-Esteem	.176***	3.46	<.001	[.076, .275]
H2a		PSM-C– >Self-Esteem	–.078	–1.39	.163	[.032, –.086]
H3a		PSF-A – >Self-Esteem	.152**	3.05	.002	[.054, .250]
H4a		PSF-C– >Self-Esteem	–.116	–1.86	.063	[–.238, .006]
H1b		Self-Esteem – > CV[1]	–.128***	–3.54	<.001	[–.200, –.057]
H3b		Self-Esteem – > CV[2]	–.122**	–3.59	.001	[–.195, –.049]
H1c		PSM-A – > CV	–.102**	–2.91	.004	[–.170, –.033]
H2b		PSM-C– > CV	.034	0.86	.391	[–.043, .111]
H3c		PSF-A – > CV	–.105***	–3.63	<.001	[–.162, –.048]
H4b		PSF-C– > CV	.057	1.40	.162	[–.023, .137]
	Indirect Effects					
H1		PSM-A – > Self-Esteem – > CV	–.023*	–2.48	.013	[–.040, –.005]
H2		PSM-C– >Self-Esteem – > CV	.010	1.29	.196	[–.005, .025]
H3		PSF-A – >Self-Esteem – > CV	–.019*	–2.31	.021	[–.034, –.003]
H4		PSF-C– >Self-Esteem – > CV	.014	1.65	.099	[–.003, .031]
	Total Effects					
		PSM-A – > CV	–.124***	–3.50	<.001	[–.194, –.055]
		PSM-C– > CV	.044	1.11	.268	[–.034, .121]
		PSF-A – > CV	–.124***	–4.29	<.001	[–.180, –.067]
		PSF-C– > CV	.071	1.77	.077	[–.008, .150]

*Note.*** *p< .001;* ** *p< .01;* * *p < .05; H: Hypotheses; CI: 95% Confidence Intervals; PSM-Acceptance: Mother Parenting Styles-Acceptance; PSM-Control: Mother Parenting Style-Control; PSF-Acceptance: Father Parenting Style-Acceptance; PSF-C: Father Parenting Style-Control; CV: Cyberbullying Victimization. [1]In Model 1; [2]In Model 2.*

a psychological buffer against negative social dynamics in online environments by enhancing self-esteem. An adolescent who perceives themselves as accepted at home carries this self-worth into other environments, effectively forming a protective link within the mesosystem. Consequently, this resilience is transferred to the chronosystem (e.g., online environments), emerging as a form of protection against cyberbullying victimization. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's original theory was later expanded into the Bioecological Model, shifting the focus toward proximal processes–the recurring and reciprocal interactions between an individual and their immediate environment (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). These proximal processes are often deeply intertwined with cultural norms (Merçon-Vagos et al., 2020). In a cultural context such as Türkiye, a controlling parenting style, which characterized by strict rules and psychological pressure, may be perceived by Turkish adolescents as a one-way process rather than a reciprocal interaction. This lack of reciprocity suggests that in this specific cultural context, controlling parenting fails to cultivate the self-esteem necessary to mediate the relationship with cyberbullying victimization.

Specifically, maternal and paternal acceptance were found to positively predicted self-esteem, providing support for H1a and H3a. Within the framework of Bioecological Theory' proximal process, an accepting parenting style, which characterized by the recognition of the adolescent's autonomy and the provision of sincere emotional support, functions as a high-quality interaction that fosters the adolescents' internal resource characteristics (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). This supportive environment encourages the development of psychological autonomy, which directly enhances the adolescent's self-esteem. This aligns with established developmental literature suggesting that positive parenting behaviors strengthen the individual's self-esteem (Du et al., 2022; Garaigordobil & Navarro, 2022; Szokdy et al., 2021).

Conversely, controlling parenting styles from both mothers and fathers were not significant predictors of self-esteem, leading to the rejection of H2a and H4a. Although this finding diverges from some studies (Kang et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2021), it is consistent with research emphasizing the role of macrosystem (e.g., cultural context; Zhao et al., 2023). In certain cultural context, adolescents may not perceive parental control as an intrusive or negative force; instead, they may interpret it as a normative proximal process aimed at protection and guidance (Grolnick, 2002). In the Turkish culture, specifically, controlling behaviors may be viewed as a cultural norm signifying parental care and involvement rather than a restriction of freedom. This cultural nuance is supported by the work of Bean et al. (2003), who demonstrated that the impact of controlling parenting on self-esteem varies across ethnic groups–specifically showing a lack of predictive significance for African American adolescents compared to their European American counterparts.

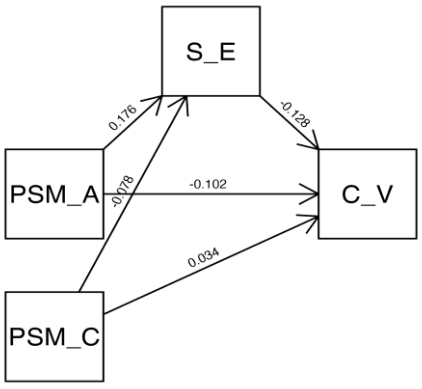


Figure 1. Mother Parenting Styles and Cyberbullying Victimization through Self-Esteem as a Mediator

Note. PSM-Acceptance: Mother Parenting Styles-Acceptance; PSM-Control: Mother Parenting Style-Control; SE: Self-Esteem; CV: Cyberbullying Victimization.

The results also demonstrated the self-esteem significantly and negatively predicted cyberbullying victimization across both models, providing support for H1b and H3b. Specifically, adolescents with higher self-esteem showed reduced vulnerability to cyberbullying victimization. These findings align with previous research that identified a negative correlation between self-esteem and cyberbullying victimization (Garaigordobil & Navarro, 2022). Adolescents with higher levels of self-esteem often possess more positive self-perceptions; from a bioecological perspective (Process-Person-Context-Time [PPCT] Model; Krebs, 2009), this functions as a personal resource characteristic that enables them to adopt more assertive coping strategies and resist or mitigate risks with the digital chronosystem.

Furthermore, while maternal and paternal acceptance styles were significant predictors of cyberbullying victimization (supporting H1c and H3c), controlling parenting styles did not significantly predict such victimization (H2b and H4b were unsupported). Although these findings diverge from some previous studies (e.g., Chu & Chen, 2024; Martínez et al., 2018), they are consistent with the findings of Iorga et al. (2022). Their research similarly observed that adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive and compassionate high-quality proximal processes–experience lower rates of cyberbullying, whereas controlling parenting styles do not show a strong statistical relationship with cyberbullying victimization.

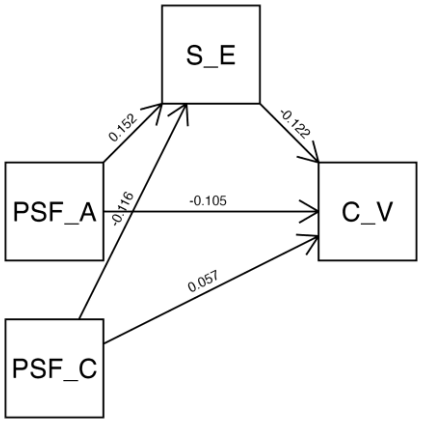


Figure 2. Father Parenting Styles and Cyberbullying Victimization through Self-Esteem as a Mediator

Note. PSF-Acceptance: Father Parenting Style-Acceptance; PSF-C: Father Parenting Style-Control; SE: Self-Esteem; CV: Cyberbullying Victimization

Limitations and Recommendations

This research is limited in some ways, even with its substantial contributions. First, parenting styles were assessed solely from adolescents' perspectives and did not include parents' self-reports. Future research could incorporate parental reports to examine how parenting styles predict adolescents' cyberbullying victimization more comprehensively. Second, adolescents' cyberbullying victimization experiences were assessed retrospectively, which may have introduced recall bias. Therefore, future studies could examine cyberbullying victimization more directly and comprehensively, particularly through data obtained from social networking site platforms. Additionally, because this study used cross-sectional design means its results can only suggest correlations. Longitudinal or experimental studies are needed for a deeper understanding of how variables affect each other.

Implications

This research offers key understandings of how parental approaches affect whether adolescents are susceptible to cyberbullying in the online world. Adolescents experiencing positive and accepting parenting styles appear to be more protected and resilient against cyberbullying on online platforms. In the same way, adolescents whose parents are accepting usually have higher self-esteem, correlating with a lower likelihood of being cyberbullying victims.

Conclusion

This study reveals that adolescents' self-esteem influences the connection between how they see their parents' acceptance and their experience with cyberbullying. Specifically, parental acceptance parenting styles positively predict adolescents' self-esteem and negatively predict cyberbullying victimization. In contrast, parental control parenting styles neither significantly predict self-esteem nor cyberbullying victimization, and their relationship with cyberbullying victimization is not mediated by self-esteem. The findings suggest that a potential for parents to lower their adolescents' risk of experiencing cyberbullying and enhance their self-esteem by emphasizing acceptance-based parenting practices rather than controlling parenting behaviors.

Author Contributions

The author declares that no other author has contributed to this paper and that he has read and approved the final version of the article.

Ethical Declaration

This study was conducted with the approval of the Necmettin Erbakan University Social and Humanities Scientific Research Ethics Committee, as granted at the meeting held on September 05, 2026 (Protocol No. 2025/743).

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that he has no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of the study.

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Declaration of Generative AI Use

(During the English language editing stage of this study, the ChatGPT generative artificial intelligence tool was used to a limited extent and exclusively for language translation purposes. The translated text was carefully reviewed for accuracy by the author, and all necessary revisions were made. The author take full responsibility for the content of the article.

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