

Examining the Complex Relations Between Childhood Adversity, Mindfulness, Attachment, and Various Personality Outcomes: A Bayesian Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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Research has demonstrated that childhood abuse and neglect can negatively impact individuals into adulthood. Abuse and neglect are associated with insecure attachment, lower mindfulness, and disordered personality traits, including borderline and psychopathic traits. **Objective:** The purpose of our present study was two-fold; first, we wanted to replicate the finding that the relationships between abuse and neglect and these traits are partly indirect through insecure attachment. Second, we wanted to determine whether mindfulness is an additional mediator in these relationships. **Method:** A sample of 291 undergraduate students participated in the current study ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.7, SD = 6.5$). **Results:** Findings from a Bayesian Structural Equation Model supported the prediction that the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits was indirect through insecure attachment. More specifically, for borderline traits it was indirect through anxious attachment while interpersonal manipulation and callous affect psychopathic traits it was indirect through avoidant attachment. Importantly, mindfulness was not a significant mediator in the model for any of the outcome variables. **Conclusions:** Overall, there was support for the idea that insecure attachment was a potential mechanism in the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits, though there was no support for mindfulness as a potential mediator. Implications are discussed.

Clinical Impact Statement

Childhood abuse and neglect have been implicated in the development of disordered personality traits, including borderline and psychopathic traits. Such traits are related to various negative outcomes, including risk-taking, impulsivity, and hostility (American Psychological Association [APA], 2013), highlighting the need to find targets for intervention. Our findings indicate that the relationship between abuse/neglect and borderline traits appears to be indirect through anxious attachment while the relationship between abuse/neglect and psychopathic traits (interpersonal manipulation and callous affect) is mediated by avoidant attachment. Mindfulness was not a significant mediator in these relationships.

Keywords: childhood abuse and neglect, insecure attachment, mindfulness, borderline personality, psychopathic personality

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Childhood abuse and neglect are relatively common (e.g., 27% of adult Canadians over 15 have experienced childhood physical or sexual abuse; Government of Canada—Statistics Canada, 2020), and it would appear that childhood abuse and neglect are related to many negative outcomes, including borderline and psychopathic traits (Fuchshuber et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2018; Maunder et al.,

2021; Pohl et al., 2021; Porter et al., 2020; Rakhshani & Furr, 2021; Ridolfi et al., 2020). These disordered personality traits are also related to negative outcomes such as impulsivity, hostility, and risk-taking (American Psychological Association, 2013), making it imperative that research examine potential mechanisms in the relationship between adversity (abuse and neglect) and disordered personality traits. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) involves higher levels of risk-taking, impulsivity, hostility, negative affect, empathy deficits, and instability of self-image and occurs ranging from .7% to 5.9% within the population (APA, 2013). Psychopathic traits include interpersonal manipulation and callous affect as well as an erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior (Hare, 2003). Although the prevalence of psychopathy depends on the definition and the setting, within offender populations prevalence of psychopathy generally ranges from 16% to 25% (Rotter et al., 2002). A gap in the literature is the mechanism(s) that underlie the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and borderline and psychopathic

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personality. The purpose of our study was to examine two potential mechanisms: insecure attachment and mindfulness.

Attachment

Attachment has previously been found to mediate the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and several negative outcomes, including eating disorders (Tasca et al., 2013) and psychological distress and well-being (Corcoran & McNulty, 2018). Attachment to others has been conceptualized in four different styles that are based largely on early interactions with caregivers (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Individuals with a secure attachment style are comfortable with intimacy, seek mutual support in relationships, and have a positive view of themselves and others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Insecure attachment comprises three different categories, namely avoidant, fearful, and anxious attachment. There is a well-established relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and insecure attachment (Cook et al., 2005; Le et al., 2021; Roters, 2019; Roters & Book, 2023a; Yang & Perkins, 2021). In avoidant attachment, the individual sees no value in being close with others and views others negatively, however, sees themselves in a positive light (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). On the other hand, people with fearful attachment wish to have close relationships but tend to be mistrustful of others and fear rejection, thus viewing others and themselves negatively (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Lastly, anxious attachment involves being overly reliant on others in relationships and seeking constant approval from partners, and viewing others positively and the self negatively (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Importantly, people with disordered personalities tend to have insecure attachment styles (Brennan & Shaver, 1998; Crawford et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2001; Nakash et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2020) specifically avoidant attachment style is correlated with psychopathic traits (Gacono & Meloy, 1991; Gacono et al., 1992; Gambin et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2001; Schimmenti et al., 2014), fearful is associated with psychopathic traits (Schimmenti et al., 2014), and anxious is associated with borderline traits (Carol & Davies, 1995; Levy, 2005; Nakash et al., 2021; Patrick, et al., 1994; Smith et al., 2020). It would seem from previous research that the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits may be indirect through insecure attachment (see Figure 1; Cohen et al., 2017; Roters, 2019; Roters & Book, 2023a).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness might also be a mediator in our model (Roters & Book, 2023a; see Figure 1), particularly because it has been found to mediate the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and negative outcomes such as alcohol use (Brett et al., 2018). Mindfulness is defined as attending in the moment, purposely and nonjudgmentally, in a directed way (Bögels et al., 2008). Relatedly when individuals experience abuse and neglect, they tend to disconnect the trauma in a separate area of consciousness apart from regular functioning (Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Sayar & Kose, 2003). Further, the research has shown that lower levels of emotional awareness/mindfulness are often experienced by people with insecure/anxious attachments (Polizzi et al., 2018; Westbrook & Berenbaum, 2017), thus there may be a negative relation between these mediators. In terms of personality, psychopathic and borderline

traits have both been found to be associated with lower levels of mindfulness (Douglas et al., 2006; Fonagy, 2000; Karterud & Kongerslev, 2019; Vinet et al., 2018). In the treatment of borderline personality, interventions target lower mindfulness (Linehan, 2018) and many correctional programs (with individuals higher in psychopathic traits) target a lack of self-awareness as an area for intervention (Douglas et al., 2006).

Current Study

The purpose of our study was to explore insecure attachment and mindfulness as mechanisms in the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits. While there is some previous research examining attachment style, this relationship has not been evaluated in a multivariate model to our knowledge. We expect to find that the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and borderline traits will be indirect through anxious attachment (Cohen et al., 2017; Roters, 2019; Roters & Book, 2023a). As well, the relationship between abuse and neglect and interpersonal manipulation and callous affect will be indirect through avoidant attachment (Cohen et al., 2017; Roters, 2019). Finally, the relationship between abuse and neglect and erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior will be indirect through fearful attachment. This last prediction stems from previous work finding that neither anxious nor avoidant attachment was a mediator in relation to erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior traits (Roters, 2019). In terms of mindfulness, we expect it to mediate the relationships between childhood abuse and neglect and all three of the personality traits (Roters & Book, 2023a). Importantly, the present study will use structural equation modeling to examine all these predictions within one single model.

Method

Participants and Procedures

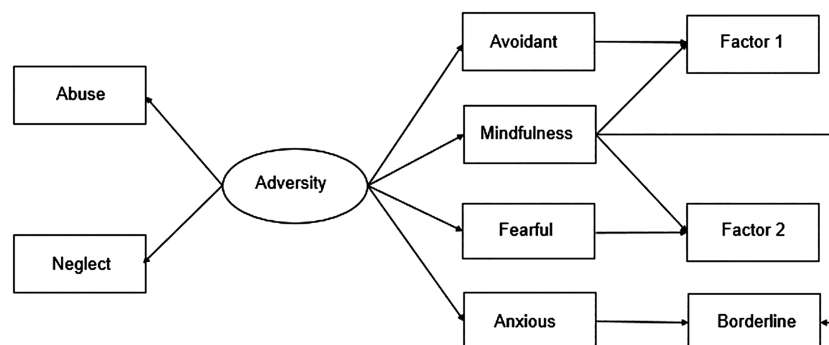
A Canadian sample of undergraduate students ($N = 291$; 88.3% women) were recruited and tested using the SONA online recruiting software. Our study received ethical clearance from a Research Ethics Board. Interested students who agree to participate filled out self-report measures on the Qualtrics platform for course credit or were given 20 dollars at the completion of the research study. The mean age of participants is 21.7 ($SD = 6.5$). Of the participants 77.3% reported being White or Caucasian, 6.5% reported being Black or African American, 1.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, 7.2% Asian, 6.9% Other, and .7% not disclosing. When reporting education level, 43.6% were high school graduates, 27.2% had some college, 5.8% had a 2-year degree, 21.3% had a 4-year degree, 1.4% had a doctorate, and .7% did not disclose. Notably, 42.3% self-reported they had a history of mental illness.

Measures

The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ; Bernstein et al., 2003) comprises 28 items examining abuse (sexual, physical, and emotional) and neglect (physical and emotional). Items are scaled as 1 (*never true*), 2 (*rarely true*), 3 (*sometimes true*), 4 (*often true*), and 5 (*very often true*). Some examples of items are "I believe that I was physically abused" and "I thought that my parents wished that I had never been born." Of note, the three validity items were not used, and total scores are computed as the mean across items ($\alpha = .94$).

Figure 1

Structural Equation Model Where Adversity (Comprised Abuse and Neglect) Through Mindfulness and Attachment, All Relate to Personality (Either Borderline or Psychopathic Traits)



As childhood adversities often co-occur in the forms of abuse and neglect (Bernstein et al., 2003), they are taken together as a potential trigger to harmful developmental outcomes, and we have chosen to use the overall composite score from the CTQ as our measure of childhood abuse and neglect.

Trent Relationship Structures Questionnaire (T-RSQ; Scharfe, 2016) comprises 40 items used to assess attachment styles (secure, fearful, anxious, and avoidant) across close friendships, romantic, and family relationships. Reliabilities improve when questions are asked with a specific target in mind (.59–.83; Scharfe, 2016). We examined attachment to mother and father in this study. Some examples of items are “I am comfortable having others depend on me” (*secure*), “I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others” (*fearful*), “I worry that others do not value me as much as I value them” (*anxious*), and “I prefer not to depend on others” (*avoidant*). Items are scored from 1 to 7 where 1 (*not at all like me*) to 7 (*very much like me*). Cronbach’s α were .77 (*secure*), .89 (*fearful*), .74 (*anxious*), and .87 (*avoidant*).

Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS; Baer et al., 2004) is a 39-item self-report inventory for the assessment of mindfulness skills separated into four scales (observe, describe, act with awareness, and accept without judgment). It is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never or very rarely true*) to 5 (*almost always or always true*). Examples of items are: “I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behavior” (observe item), “I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things” (describe item), “I drive on ‘automatic pilot’ without paying attention to what I’m doing” (Act with awareness item), and “I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn’t feel them” (accept without judgment). Cronbach’s α for the total score was .85.

The Borderline Symptom List (BSL-23; Bohus et al., 2009) is a 23-item survey is a shortened version of the 95-item Borderline Symptoms List that is based on the Diagnostic and statistical manual for mental disorders (DSM)-5 diagnostic criteria for BPD (APA, 2013). Items are symptoms that are often reported by individuals who experience BPD and are scaled from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very strong*). Some examples of items are “I thought of hurting myself,” “I experienced stressful inner tension,” and “My mood rapidly cycled in terms of anxiety, anger, and depression” ($\alpha = .95$).

The Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (SRP; Paulhus et al., 2015) is a 64-item self-report scale with four subscale scores: interpersonal

manipulation, callous affect, erratic lifestyle, and antisocial behavior, with the first two facets comprising Factor 1 and the third and fourth facet comprising Factor 2. Participants respond on a scale of 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). The SRP is used in subclinical populations and the factor structure mirrors that of the psychopathy checklist—revised (Hare, 2003). Examples of items include “I like to see fist-fights” and “It’s fun to see how far you push people before they get upset.” Cronbach’s α was .88 for Factor 1 and .83 for Factor 2. Factors 1 and 2 were examined separately as Factor 1 encompasses more personality characteristics whereas Factor 2 encompasses behaviors, and thus these may act differently within the model.

Data Analysis

Several factors led us to use Bayesian models over traditional structural equation modeling techniques. First, childhood abuse and neglect tend to be highly skewed variables due to a relatively low base rate (Yalch, 2016). As well, approximately 60% of participants tend to be securely attached which denotes a fairly normal distribution (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Importantly, Bayesian statistics have been known to offer one potential solution to issues of small sample sizes, missing data, and nonnormality which is common in trauma data and research (Yalch, 2016). Additionally, estimates using Bayesian analysis are more accurate and offer a cohesive and unique approach, which is imperative in examining trauma and detrimental personality characteristics (Yalch, 2016). Owing to these benefits we have taken this Bayesian approach when examining the structural equation modelling model in Figure 1. Of note, all statistical assumptions, reliabilities, missing data analyses, bivariate correlations, and the main structural equation modelling were computed using the R studio platform R (Version 4.1.2). There were some issues regarding the assumptions underlying the proposed analyses specifically the abuse and neglect variable (see the [online supplemental materials](#)). Nonnormal data were present for abuse and neglect, however robust methods (i.e., Bayesian using the “blavaan” package) were chosen which address smaller sample sizes, nonnormality, and missing data. To bridge the gap between a frequentist and Bayesian methodology, bivariate correlations were run using frequentist Null Hypothesis Statistical Testing (NHST) approach, as well as structural equation modelling model fit using the “lavaan” package.

Results

Bivariate Correlations

Significant positive correlations are observed between Factors 1 and 2 of psychopathy as well as for borderline traits and both Factor 1 (interpersonal manipulation and callous affect) and Factor 2 (erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior; see Table 1). Further, mindfulness and fearful attachment are significantly negatively correlated, meaning that lower levels of mindfulness are related to higher levels of fearful attachment. Fearful attachment is also significantly positively correlated with both anxious and avoidant attachment. As anticipated childhood abuse and neglect are positively correlated with both avoidant and fearful attachment, though are not significantly related to anxious attachment or mindfulness. Interestingly, while child abuse is positively related to all three insecure attachment styles, neglect is only related to fearful and avoidant attachment. Adversity, abuse, and neglect are all positively related to borderline and psychopathic traits. However, the strength of the relationship is stronger for Factor 1 traits than for borderline and Factor 2 traits.

Structural Equation Model

Structural Equation modeling is used to examine the plausibility of our model displayed in Figure 2. Using the more traditional NHST approach, the evidence for model fit is mixed. The chi-square test is significant indicating poor model fit and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .137 (CI [.103, .175]) which is outside of the range for acceptable model fit. However, both measures are affected by smaller samples sizes (Tabachnick et al., 2007). Other estimates of fit are more positive. The standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) is .034 (where values less than .08 indicate a good fit) and the comparative fit index (CFI) is .947 (where values close to 1 specify a very good fit), both indicating an acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990). Given the relatively small sample and the potential for skewness in the study variables, we examined a Bayesian fit index. The posterior predictive probability of less than .001 indicates that our model does not fit the data well, as values closer to .5 indicate a good fit and values closer to 0 indicate the contrary (Merkle & Rosseel, 2018). Overall, there is mixed evidence of fit, though the CFI and SRMR are much less affected by sample size and do indicate good fit. Therefore, we examine the individual coefficients cautiously.

In conducting the Bayesian structural equation modelling analysis, the prior parameters data are specified according to the default settings within the “blavaan” package; these are specified in the online supplemental materials. No prior specifications are made as to not influence the hypothesized model and to serve as priors for future replication. Further, to the best of our knowledge, a multivariate analysis such as this has not been conducted in the literature and it is unclear how the parameters would interact with one another when estimated in a single model. Choosing to not specify priors is also based on the conflicting theories surrounding how attachment interacts with disordered personality traits (i.e., that psychopathy has been related to both avoidant and fearful attachment; Schimmenti et al., 2014). Four chains were run for 10,000 iterations, following a warmup (burnin) period of 1,000 iterations. Although “blavaan” had converged on a solution, inspection of the trace plots provided further visual evidence that the model achieved convergence. The resulting marginal

posterior distributions for the standardized parameters are depicted in the online supplemental materials with posterior means (of the relationships between the variables), *SD*, 95% highest posterior density limits (95% HPD intervals), and medians are listed for each relationship as well. Importantly in the online supplemental materials, all *R*-hat values denote convergence and the specifications of the prior distributions made by “blavaan” are listed additionally.

As expected, childhood abuse and neglect (adversity) are significantly related to both avoidant and fearful attachment (see Figure 2). As with the bivariate correlations, there is not a significant relationship between adversity and anxious attachment or mindfulness. Mindfulness is negatively related to borderline traits but is positively related to interpersonal manipulation and callous affect (Factor 1) and interpersonal manipulation and callous affect traits (Factor 2) are also positively correlated with avoidant attachment and anxious attachment is positively related to borderline traits. Contrary to prediction, fearful attachment does not predict erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior but is significantly related to borderline traits. Overall, there is support for the relationship between the mediators and borderline/psychopathic traits.

Further and as predicted, the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect (adversity) and interpersonal manipulation and callous affect traits (Factor 1) is indirect through avoidant attachment style. Moreover, the direct effect is nonsignificant. While the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect (adversity) and borderline traits is indirect through anxious attachment (as predicted), fearful attachment is also a significant mediator in the relationship. Unexpectedly, there are no indirect effects in the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect (adversity) and erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior traits (Factor 2). As well, the direct effect is nonsignificant. It is important to also note that mindfulness is not a significant mediator for any of the personality traits in our model.

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to explore the two potential mediators in the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits, namely insecure attachment style and mindfulness. Our findings indicate that insecure attachment was a significant mediator in these relationships, mirroring previous findings (e.g., Cohen et al., 2017; Roters, 2019; Roters & Book, 2023a). First, the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and borderline traits was indirect through both anxious and fearful attachment styles. While we predicted this to be the case for anxious attachment, the finding for fearful attachment was not expected. Although, not hypothesized, there is some previous research finding that fearful attachment is also related to borderline traits (Choi-Kain et al., 2009). As expected, the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and interpersonal manipulation and callous affect traits was indirect through avoidant attachment style. This finding is supported by the previous literature (Gacono & Meloy, 1991; Gacono et al., 1992; Gambin et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2001; Schimmenti et al., 2014). While previous literature suggests that fearful attachment is also related to erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior traits (Schimmenti et al., 2014), the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior traits was not mediated by any of the insecure attachment styles. Although our findings are not in line with the previous research, in another area of the literature it has been suggested that the two-factor model of

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations With Confidence Intervals

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Adversity	1.52	0.64	—								
2. Abuse	24.34	11.42	.95**	—							
			[.94, .96]								
3. Neglect	18.02	7.85	.89**	.71**	—						
			[.87, .92]	[.65, .77]							
4. Anxious	78.06	15.60	.11	.15*	.04	—					
			[−.01, .23]	[.03, .27]	[−.08, .16]						
5. Avoid	80.13	19.32	.41**	.36**	.42**	.06	—				
			[.30, .51]	[.25, .46]	[.31, .52]	[−.06, .18]					
6. Fearful	77.25	22.10	.39**	.34**	.40**	.34**	.66**	—			
			[.28, .49]	[.23, .45]	[.29, .50]	[.22, .44]	[.59, .73]				
7. Mindful	117.65	18.64	−.02	.01	−.09	−.12	−.09	−.36**	—		
			[−.15, .10]	[−.11, .14]	[−.21, .04]	[−.24, .00]	[−.21, .04]	[−.47, −.25]			
8. Borderline	48.93	19.33	.27**	.30**	.20**	.27**	.32**	.57**	−.47**	—	
			[.16, .38]	[.19, .41]	[.08, .31]	[.15, .38]	[.21, .43]	[.48, .65]	[−.57, −.37]		
9. Factor 1	71.59	15.57	.14*	.15*	.13*	−.10	.28**	.14*	−.11	.13*	
			[.02, .26]	[.02, .26]	[.00, .25]	[−.22, .03]	[.17, .39]	[.02, .26]	[−.24, .01]	[.01, .25]	
10. Factor 2	62.21	13.71	.33**	.31**	.31**	−.05	.19**	.15*	−.11	.24**	.59**
			[.22, .44]	[.20, .42]	[.20, .42]	[−.18, .07]	[.07, .31]	[.03, .27]	[−.23, .01]	[.12, .34]	[.51, .67]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. Of note, Factor 1 refers to interpersonal manipulation and callous affect, and Factor 2 refers to erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

psychopathy does not adequately describe the concept of psychopathy (Cooke & Michie, 2001). There is a three-factor model that clarifies and accentuates the personality aspects that define psychopathy versus the current model which may entangle behaviors and personality together (Cooke & Michie, 2001). Perhaps avoidant and fearful attachment may react differently to personality versus behavioral components. It is possible that because our results are based upon the two-factor model of psychopathy, we are not getting a clear picture of how each factor interacts with each insecure attachment. Further in support of this claim, the previous research found that both anxious and avoidant attachment did not act as mediators in relation to erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior traits (Roters, 2019). It was suggested that personality may be more predictive of attachment versus behavior (Roters, 2019), which may explain our null findings with fearful attachment. Overall, we replicated the importance of attachment style in the relationship between childhood abuse/neglect and both borderline and psychopathic traits (Roters, 2019; Roters & Book, 2023a). Importantly, our use of multivariate models was unique in the literature. When all these variables are modeled together, they can react in a different way than in a univariate or even a smaller multivariate approach.

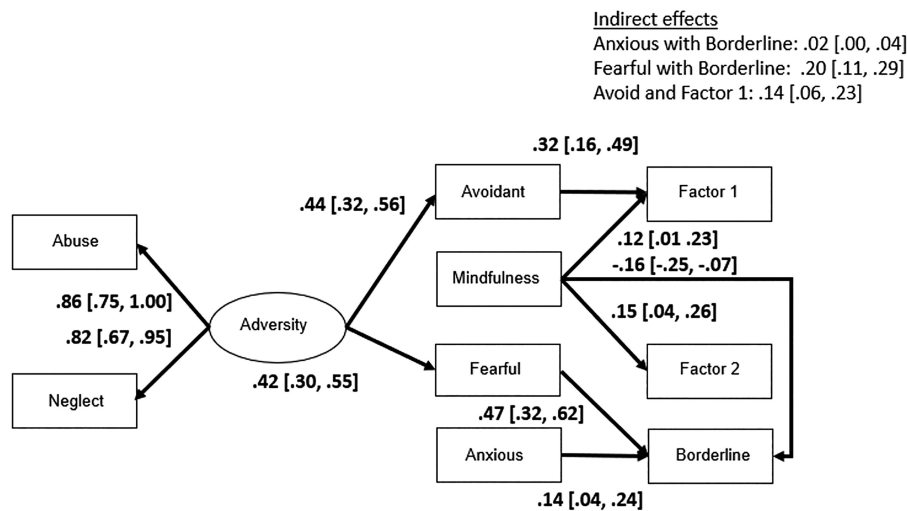
The other potential mediator being examined in our present study was mindfulness. While previous research suggests that mindfulness is related to both childhood abuse and neglect and relevant personality traits, mindfulness did not act as a mediator in our model. Although this finding is not in line with the literature where mindfulness has been related to abuse and neglect (Sayar & Kose, 2003), insecure attachments (Polizzi et al., 2018; Westbrook & Berenbaum, 2017), and both borderline and psychopathic traits (Douglas et al., 2006; Fonagy, 2000; Karterud & Kongerslev, 2019; Linehan, 2018; Vinet et al., 2018). These findings may have occurred due to the nature of the sample collected which was largely white female undergraduate students. If we were to examine abuse and neglect, insecure attachment, lower mindfulness, and borderline/psychopathic personality traits in a community, clinical, or forensic sample, we may have found very different results. Further, it is possible that the measures we used could have influenced our results. The measures we used are not clinical and focused more on subclinical populations and may have focused on less severe traits that are part of the concepts of borderline and psychopathy, which could limit the size of the effects found. As well, modeling these concepts together may have interesting effects on one another. Further, as we have not captured all the symptoms of borderline and psychopathic personality traits (i.e., emotionality, impulsivity, and empathy; APA, 2013; Hare, 2003), it is possible that insecure attachment might be a stronger symptom of disordered personality traits than mindfulness. This could be supported by the conflicting model fit and additionally, reducing these disordered personality traits to insecure attachment and mindfulness may have obscured the impact of mindfulness without having all symptoms in the model (Cole et al., 2016).

Limitations

The present study did not examine specific types of childhood abuse and neglect and it is plausible that the type of abuse (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional) or neglect (i.e., emotional or physical) can influence each attachment style and in turn, borderline/psychopathic personality traits differentially. For example, sexual abuse is believed to be a large factor in the expression of BPD (Linehan, 2018).

Figure 2

Bayesian Structural Equation Model Relating Borderline Traits and Factors 1 and 2 of Psychopathy With Standardized Coefficients



Note. Only significant paths are shown and denote 95% highest posterior density limits (95% HPD intervals) that do not cross 0. Indirect effects were not observed for mindfulness thus these were not reported here (see the [online supplemental materials](#)). Of note, Factor 1 refers to interpersonal manipulation and callous affect, and Factor 2 refers to erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior.

Moreover, parental neglect is also believed to be a large factor in the development of psychopathic traits (Gao et al., 2010). Another limitation in our study is that we have employed a relatively small homogeneous sample of white female undergraduate students which reduces the generalizability of our findings and may have attenuated relationships (e.g., mindfulness and attachment style). Lastly, if our findings are expanded or replicated, clinicians might consider that providing intervention for the mechanisms (i.e., attachment and mindfulness) in the relationship between neglect and abuse and problematic personality is nuanced and requires a clear etiology when providing intervention for clients/patients.

Future Research

In the future, we aim to expand to a larger clinical and forensic population to detect true effects and utilize a longitudinal approach for any causal claims. We also would like to examine more variables in order to fully uncover the mechanisms behind disordered personalities. The addition of more theoretically driven variables will not only improve model fit but will reflect the true structure of borderline and psychopathic personality traits (i.e., self-esteem and emotionality; Roters & Book, 2023b). The addition of theoretically driven variables will also demonstrate that treatment is complex, has many targets, and should not be a one-size-fits-all approach.

Conclusions

The present study examined two potential mediators in the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits in one large multivariate model. This addresses the gap within the literature whereby mechanisms may have been uncovered to aid with interventions for these disordered personality traits.

Insecure attachment was confirmed to be a mediator in this relationship for both borderline and interpersonal manipulation and callous affect traits, but not for erratic lifestyle and antisocial behavior traits. Mindfulness was not a significant mediator for any of the outcomes. However, this may be due to a lack of variability in a relatively homogeneous sample. Our future steps are clarifying the role of mindfulness and whether it is a mediator in the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and disordered personality traits.

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