

Childhood Maltreatment and Behaviour Problems: Exploring the Mediating Role of Parental Attachment

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Abstract

Background. Childhood maltreatment occurred to be the significant risk factor for development of number of adverse mental and many behavioural problems in adolescents. Seemingly, strong parental attachment provides a positive basis to overcome the harms of childhood maltreatment. The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of parental attachment between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems.

Method. The study utilized the correlational research design and the data was collected through purposive and convenient sampling from adolescents ($N = 200$) with the age range of 12-18 ($M = 14.70$, $SD = 1.74$) years.

Results. Significant positive association between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems was observed. Non-significant association was found between the two subscales of parental attachment with all variables of the study except for the negative association of goal corrected partnership with childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems. Goal corrected partnership further mediated the association between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems. The present study yielded the significance of goal corrected partnership (indicating child empathy with parents) in avoiding the adverse childhood experiences.

Conclusion. The findings of the present research could be beneficial both for theory building as well as for intervention-based programs. These findings could further be utilized to spread awareness among young adolescents to modify and minimize behaviour problems.

Keywords. Childhood maltreatment, childhood trauma, behavioural problems, parental attachment, secure attachment.



Introduction

Childhood maltreatment is the traumatic experiences that occur during childhood and are stressful for individuals (Hepp et al., 2021; Rameckers et al., 2021). Childhood maltreatment is an umbrella term that encompasses various forms including variety of negative experiences such as emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, and parental discord (Rousson et al., 2020). Early age maltreatment is globally observed among the young adolescents. According to the meta-analysis report of childhood maltreatment, 18% of the population experienced physical abuse, 36% experienced emotional abuse, 26 % experienced sexual abuse (18% girls and 8% boys), and 20% reported other forms of maltreatment (Stoltenborgh et al., 2015). Childhood maltreatment proved to be a significant risk factor for the development of number of mental and physical health problems (de Ruiter et al., 2022; Liu, 2019), individuals with the experience of early life maltreatment are more likely to exhibit depression (Humphreys et al., 2020), anxiety (R. T. Liu, 2019), post-traumatic symptom disorder (PTSD) (Rameckers et al., 2021) and many neurological and physical health issues (Mehta et al., 2021). Apparently, the evidence is inclined with the well-documented relationship among childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems (Pandey et al., 2020; Su et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2019). Collectively, the afore mentioned information indicates that root to many complex mental disorders originates from early childhood, the sensitive period of development of a child. However, it is commonly observed that individual develop coping strategies to overcome the harms of these adverse experiences (Sheffler et al., 2019).

Coping strategies indicates the various behaviours that an individual adapts to overcome the unpleasant event (Anderson et al., 2022). Seemingly, attachment with close relationships is observed to be an effective strategy to overcome an unsettling event (Lahousen et al., 2019). Evidence revealed that adolescents often used attachment with a caregiver as a form of coping mechanism and tends to overcome the adverse experiences

(Bayrak et al., 2018; Spruit et al., 2020). This attachment ideology can be labelled as Parental Attachment, which can be elaborated as a deep and enduring relationship between a child and his/her caregiver in which a child seeks closeness and feels more secure in the presence of an attachment figure. The parental response to the child's needs called as Attachment Behaviours act as motivator for children in there coping period (Hernández-Alava & Popli, 2017). Attachment behaviour can be identified by specific symbols and behaviours from the children. For instance, seeking proximity to attachment figure or caregiver when sad or hurt (Rees, 2007).

Additionally, the attachment behavioural system provides a fundamental framework for understanding and coping of early life trauma and maltreatment (Cassidy et al., 2013). Bowlby also classified it as an *internal working model*. According to this model, the significance of close relationship of a child can not be underestimated, as the secure attachment (Ding et al., 2016). Secure attachment between caregiver and child has the potential to protect the child from the negative effects of childhood traumatic experiences in a child's life (Ding et al., 2016; Erozkhan, 2016; Ribera et al., 2022). A secure parental attachment significantly helps children to effectively regulate emotional arousal (Erozkhan, 2016). For instance, a child with a history of maltreatment would tend to turn towards a comforting person to calm down the negative or destructive thoughts instead of going barbaric or delinquent.

In accordance with the indigenous culture of Pakistan, family structure and role and responsibilities of every relationship is set with defined boundaries. Additionally, the family structure (joint or nuclear) of Pakistan develops even more clear understanding about the mechanism of coping (Zafar et al., 2022). According to a survey in Pakistan (2022), it is established that around 51.46% women are housewives and the availability of even a single parent develops a sense of security for a child and forms a strong communal bond to open-up when a child feels distressed (Thomas et al., 2017). These positive factors help to develop a fundamental framework for the present study and motivates to explore the

mediating role of parental attachment with childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a negative association between childhood trauma and parental attachment.
2. Childhood trauma will negatively predict behaviour problems of adolescents.
3. Parental attachment will mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and behaviour problems.

Method

Using the purposive and convenient sampling technique the data was collected from different schools and colleges (both public and private) of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Students from class six to twelve with an age range of 12-18 were selected for the study, and the total sample of $N = 200$ was finalized. Total six schools and four colleges were approached through the letter for their participation in the study. The permission for data collection was granted from school authorities and parents through consent form. A complete set of instructions and purpose of the study was provided to the participants. In case of sensitive questions, participants were briefed and were assured that they can leave the study whenever they want if they consider questions not suitable. In case of any inconvenience caused by the questionnaire, the participants were facilitated with psychological resources to take professional help. Furthermore, the active team of psychologists were also working during the process of data collection for quick help and assessment in case of any discomfort to a student.

Assessment Measures

Adolescents Attachment Questionnaire. This scale (West et al., 1998) was designed to measure the component features of parents-adolescents attachment of age 12-19 comprising a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). AAQ consists of eight items with three subscales. 1) *Anger Distress* indicates the negative affective response to the perceived unavailability of attachment figure. Higher

scores on this domain indicates that the child might be keeping an anger toward the attachment figure 2) *Availability* indicates the adolescent's confidence in the availability of the attachment figure. Higher score on this sub-scale indicates that child have a confidence in availability of the attachment figure. 3) *Goal-corrected Partnership* indicates the value to which a child feels sympathetic and have understanding regarding attachment figures. Higher scores on this domain indicates that child doesn't need to consider a need or feeling toward the attachment. The scale has a satisfactory alpha coefficient (α) of .62 to .80 (West et al., 1998).

Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form. This Scale (Bernstein et al., 2003) consist of 28-item designed to measure abuse and neglect on is a 5-poin Likert scale (1 = *Never True* to 5 = *Very Often True*) for 12 years and older children. CTQ-SF contains six subscales; three abuse (Emotional, Physical, and Sexual), two neglects (Emotional and Physical) and a Minimization/Denial subscale to check for extreme response bias. Each subscale has five items except minimization/denial with three items. The possible range of all scales is 5 to 25, the possible range of Minimization/Denial scale is 0-3, and the total score ranges from 5-125 with higher score indicating higher severity of childhood trauma and lower score indicating the less severity of trauma.

Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire. SDQ (Goodman & Cook, 2019) is a youth self-report used to measure behaviour and emotional functioning in adolescents through 3-point Likert scale (0 = *Never True* to 2 = *Certainly True*). It consists of 25 items including three subscales i.e., externalizing behaviour problem internalizing behaviour and Prosocial behaviour. The possible score ranges from 0-40 for behaviour problem. Higher scores will indicate higher level of behaviour problem (internalizing, externalizing and total behaviour problems) and lower scores will indicate lower level of behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing and total behaviour problems). The scale has test-retest stability of .63 with the internal consistency coefficient ($\alpha = .73$)

(Goodman & Cook, 2019). However, pro-social behaviours were not used in the present study.

Results

Overall, 200 adolescents participated in the study ($n = 110$) male and ($n = 90$) females. Most adolescents were studying in private schools (93%) and belonged to nuclear family system (52%). Larger population reported the history of maltreatment (63%) and a close proportion (58%) didn't want to answer this particular question. Additionally, 51.1% reported that they know someone with the same experiences. Lastly, parental attachment revealed that adolescents are more attached to their mothers (83%) as compared to their fathers.

The psychometric analysis revealed good to satisfactory ($\alpha = .62- .90$) value Cronbach alpha reliabilities of scales and subscales of the study variables. Moreover, the findings revealed normal distribution of data. After psychometric properties, correlation and prediction analysis was carried out.

The findings of the Person Correlation Moment illustrated that first two sub scales of

attachment (anger distress and availability) showed non-significant association with all study variables, however, goal-corrected partnership revealed significant negative correlation with all study variable except for physical abuse and externalizing behaviour problems. Furthermore, childhood maltreatment revealed, significant and positive association with behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing and total behaviour problems).

Overall, the correlation analysis between study variables revealed significant association between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems). However, the findings revealed that adolescent's attachment depicted non-significant association with its subs-scales except for goal-corrected partnership. Based on the current findings Linear Regression analysis was carried out to conduct hypothesis testing and for prediction and mediation analysis. The findings are further described in Table 1.

Table 1
Reliability and Correlation among subscales (N = 200)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Adolescents Attachment Questionnaire											
1 Anger Distress	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 Availability	.41**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Goal Corrected Partnership	.09	-.03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Childhood Trauma Questionnaire											
4 Emotional Abuse	.04	.05	-.18**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 Physical Abuse	.03	.12	-.05	.25**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6 Sexual Abuse	-.06	.01	-.24**	.61**	.14*	-	-	-	-	-	-
7 Emotional Neglect	-.02	-.09	-.18**	.47**	.17*	.53**	-	-	-	-	-
8 Physical Neglect	-.13	-.05	-.27**	.55**	.19*	.65**	.60**	-	-	-	-
9 Total Childhood Maltreatment	-.04	.02	-.24**	.77**	.58*	.76**	.72**	.78*	-	-	-
Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire											
10 Externalizing problems	.06	-.06	-.06	.23**	.05	.14	.11	.20*	.19*	-	-
11 Internalizing Problem	.02	-.05	-.20**	.22**	-.01	.26**	.18**	.28*	.24*	.31*	-
12 Total Behaviour Problems	.05	-.06	-.16*	.27**	.02	.25**	.18**	.29*	.26*	.81*	.81*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

The findings of regression analysis demonstrated that among the sub-scales of adolescent attachment, only two sub-scales (availability and goal-corrected partnership)

showed significant and negative prediction for behaviour problems. Availability showed 2% of the variance for internalizing behaviour problems and goal-corrected partnership

added 4% and 3% of the variance for internalizing and total behaviour problems. However, non-significant predict for externalizing behaviour problems was observed. Similarly, emotional abuse showed significant and positive prediction with 6%, 6%, and 8% of the variance for behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems). Sexual abuse further revealed significant and positive prediction for behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems) with the account of 6%, 6%, and 6% variance. Additionally, emotional

neglect revealed positive and significant prediction of internalizing and total behaviour problems with 6% and 3% variance accounted for this association. Whereas, physical neglect revealed positive and significant prediction with the variance of 6%, 4%, and 9% for behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems). Lastly, total childhood trauma also predicted behaviour problems significantly and positively with 6%, 4%, and 7% variance accounted for this association. The details of the finding are further elaborated in Table 2.

Table 2

Linear Regression Analysis to Predict Internalizing, Externalizing and Total Behaviour problems from Childhood Trauma, and Adolescents Attachment (N = 200)

		Outcome Variables														
Model	Predictor	Internalizing Behaviour Problems					Externalizing Behaviour Problems					Total Behaviour Problems				
		B	B	SE	R ²	F	β	B	SE	R ²	F	β	B	SE	R ²	F
1	Constant	.20	10.41	1.02	.00	.19	.06	8.55	1.01	.004	.86	.05	18.95	1.65	.003	.67
	Anger Distress		.03	.09				.19	.10				.11	.15		
2	Constant	-	11.32	.97	.002	.46	-	10.23	.96	.00	.74	-	21.55	1.56	.01	.91
	Availability	.05	-.17**	.10			.06	-.08	.10			.17	-.14	.26		
3	Constant	-	13.98	1.18	.04	8.36**	-	10.5	1.19	.004	.84	-	24.48	1.92	.03	5.50*
	Goal-Corrected Partnership	.20	.38**	.10			.06	-.19	.10			.16	-.47*	.26		
4	Constant	.22	8.18	.89	.05	9.88**	.23	6.73	.67	.05	10.83*	.38	14.81	1.4	.08	16.18**
	Emotional Abuse		.29**	.06				.20*	.06				.41**	.10		
5	Constant	-	10.84	.81	.00	.04	.05	8.94	.80	.002	.56	.02	19.78	1.3	.00	.08
	Physical Abuse	.01	-.01	.05				.03	.04				.02	.07		
6	Constant		8.41	.67	.07	14.40**	.14	8.24	.78	.02	3.97*	.25	16.65	1.08	.06	12.86**
	Sexual Abuse	.26	.23**	.06				.12*	.06				.35**	.09		
7	Constant	.29	8.38	.95	.04	7.25*	.11	8.17	.95	.01	2.32	.18	16.35	1.52	.03	6.96*
	Emotional Neglect		.17*	.06				.09	.06				.26*	.09		
8	Constant	.28	7.64	.80	.08	16.79**	.20	7.25	.81	.04	8.57**	.30	14.88	1.28	.09	19.34**
	Physical Neglect		.25**	.06				.28**	.06				.42**	.09		
9	Constant	.24	6.96**	1.14	.06	11.53**	.19	6.43	1.14	.04	7.55*	.26	13.39	1.82	.07	14.79**
	Total Childhood Maltreatment		.16**	.02				.05*	.02				.10**	.03		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

Followed by the Linear Regression analysis, mediation analysis was carried out based on the results of correlation analysis. Keeping in mind: 1) significant association between independent variable and dependent variable, 2) significant association between independent variables and mediator, 3)

significant association between independent variable and dependent variable. Therefore, mediation analysis for physical abuse and externalizing behaviour problem was not carried out due to their non-significant association in correlation analysis.

Table 3

Mediating Effect of Adolescents Attachment in Predicting Internalizing Behaviour Problems with Childhood Trauma and its Sub Scales (N = 200)

Model	Variable	Internalizing Behaviour Problem			
		Without Mediator		With Mediator	
		B	B	LL	UL
1	Constant	12.34	14.22	8.62	19.83
	Emotional Abuse	.29*	.27*	.04	.29
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.21*	-.4	-.01
	R^2	.06	.08		
	F	6.30*	5.76**		
2	Constant	12.56	14.19	8.78	19.6
	Sexual Abuse	.22**	.20**	.07	.32
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.18	-.37	.01
	R^2	.08	.09		
	F	8.61**	6.93**		
3	Constant	13.18	15.01	9.54	20.47
	Emotional Neglect	.17*	.14*	.02	.26
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.21*	-.40	-.01
	R^2	.05	.07		
	F	5.63*	5.31**		
4	Constant	11.99	13.52	8.04	18.99
	Physical Neglect	.24**	.21**	.09	.34
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.16	-.35	.04
	R^2	.09	.10		
	F	10.01**	7.57**		
5	Constant	10.92	12.94	6.92	18.47
	Total Childhood Maltreatment	.05**	.04*	.01	.18
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.19*	-.38	.001
	R^2	.17	.08		
	F	6.91**	5.94**		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

The findings revealed partial mediation of goal-corrected partnership for childhood maltreatment (emotional abuse, emotional neglect, and total childhood maltreatment) and internalizing behaviour problems. The indirect effect projected that goal-corrected partnership significantly and negatively mediate internalizing behaviour problems through emotional abuse, emotional neglect, and total childhood maltreatment with 8%, 7%, and 8% of the variance accounted for

this association. However, goal-corrected partnership revealed non-significant mediation for sexual abuse, and physical neglect. The partial mediation is further explained in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Mediating Effect of Adolescents Attachment in Predicting Internalizing Behaviour Problems with Childhood Trauma and its Sub Scales

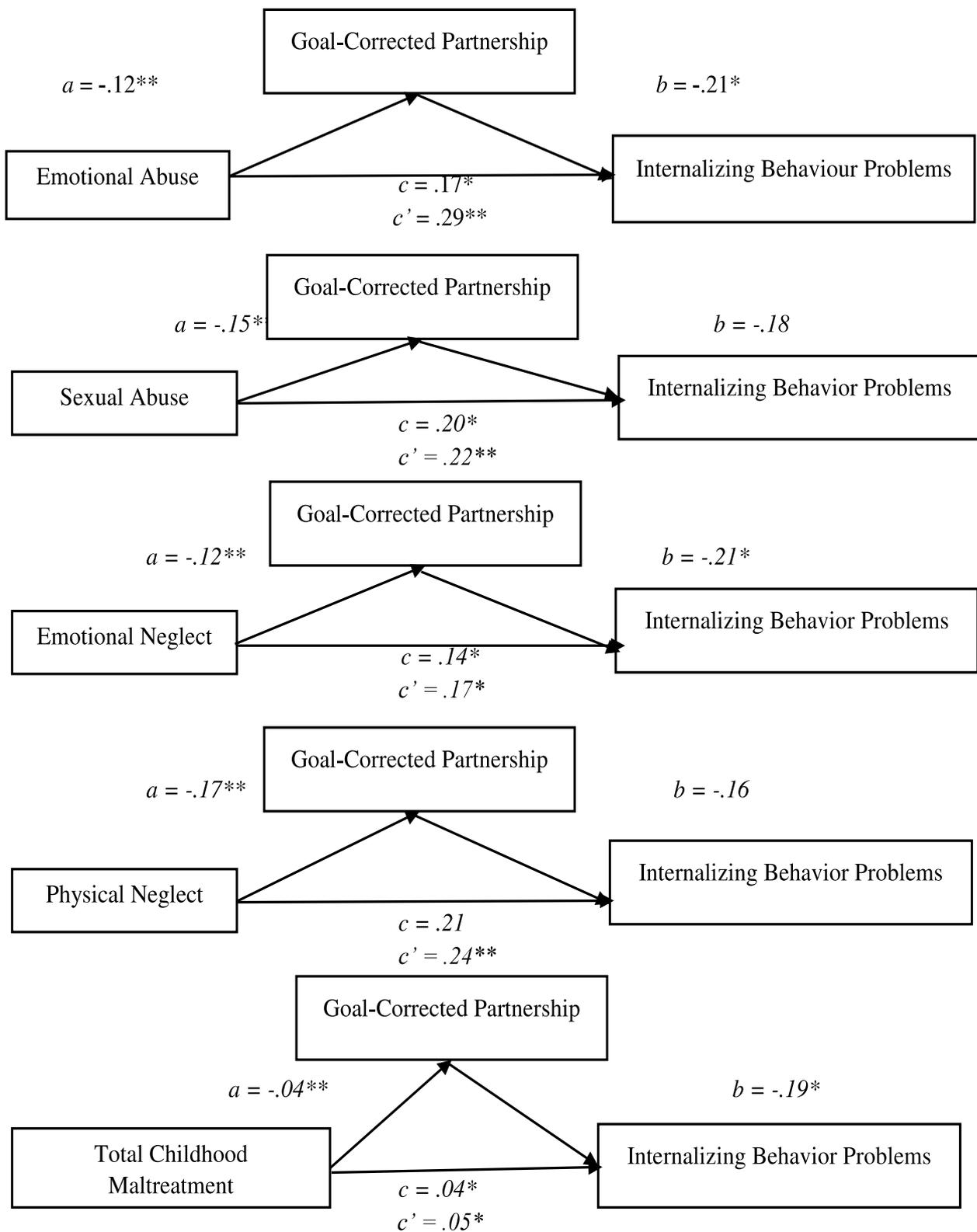


Table 4

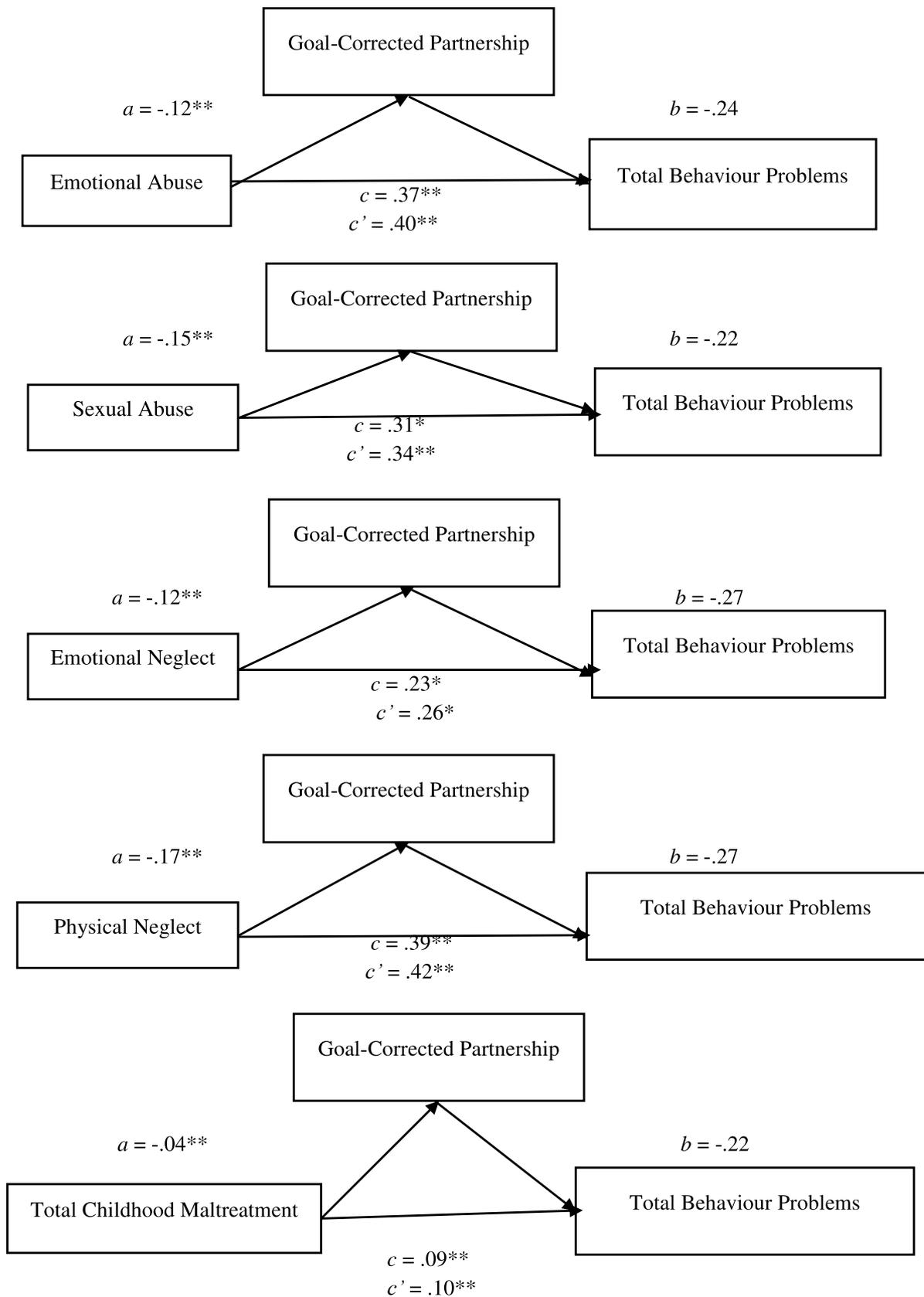
Mediating effect of Adolescents Attachment in predicting Total Behaviour Problems through Childhood Trauma and its subscales (N = 200)

Model	Variable	Total Behaviour Problem			
		Without Mediator	With Mediator	CI 95%	
		B	B	LL	UL
1	Constant	19.53	21.67	12.71	30.64
	Emotional Abuse	.40**	.37**	.27	.57
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.24	-.55	.07
	R^2	.08	.09		
	F	8.76**	6.64**		
2	Constant	21.58	23.59	14.8	32.39
	Sexual Abuse	.34**	.31*	.11	.51
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.22	-.54	.09
	R^2	.06	.07		
	F	7.16**	5.45**		
3	Constant	22.48	24.82	15.94	33.69
	Emotional Neglect	.26*	.23*	.03	.43
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.27	-.58	.05
	R^2	.04	.06		
	F	4.61*	4.02*		
4	Constant	20.04	21.64	12.82	30.46
	Physical Neglect	.42**	.39**	.19	.58
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.27	-.48	.15
	R^2	.09	.10		
	F	10.53**	7.38**		
5	Constant	17.61	19.9	10.22	29.57
	Total Childhood Trauma	.10**	.09**	.04	.14
	Goal Corrected Partnership		-.22	-.53	.09
	R^2	.07	.08		
	F	7.88**	5.92**		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

The findings demonstrated non-significant mediation for childhood maltreatment (emotional, sexual abuse, and emotional, physical neglect) and total behaviour problems. The findings are further described in detail in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Mediating Effect of Adolescents Attachment in Predicting Total Behaviour Problems with Childhood Trauma and its Sub Scale



Discussion

The study established satisfactory reliabilities of all the scales and sub scales of study variables ($\alpha = .62 - .90$). The study aimed to examine the mediation role of parental attachment for association between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problem in adolescents. The findings demonstrated the positive association of childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems and significant negative association of only one sub scale of adolescent attachment (goal-corrected partnership) with the proposed association. Additionally, the partial mediation of goal-corrected partnership was observed between childhood maltreatment and internalizing behaviour problems and non-significant mediation for total behaviour problems and childhood maltreatment.

The results of the Person Product Moment Correlation revealed the significant positive association between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems, except for the non-significant association of physical abuse (sub scale of childhood trauma questionnaire) and externalizing behaviour problems (sub scale of strength and difficulty questionnaire). The results are in lined with the previous finding (Wang et al., 2019) elucidating the impact of childhood maltreatment on the behaviour of the adolescents. However, the non-significant findings could be further explained in Pakistani cultural context, the ideology of disciplining a child is mingled with the idea of supremacy (Bibi et al., 2022; Siddiqui et al., 2018). The unnecessary use of force and harsh voice of tone is considered the appropriate way of disciplining a child (Choi et al., 2013). The common practice of strict and aggressive behaviour for teaching and parenting develops a confusion and commonality in a child's brain that they cannot consider or differentiate abuse from the parenting.

Moreover, the non-significant findings of externalizing behaviour problems are also in lined with the previous literature (Elam et al., 2022; Kretschmer et al., 2022) describing that externalizing behaviour problems are not entirely stimuli induced. Additionally, the findings could be explained in indigenous accept of Pakistan. As explained earlier, strict

parenting not only confuses a child but also give birth to the development of passiveness in a child's mind (Sarwar, 2016). The strict parenting or aggressive environment of home or school tends to suppress their ability to express their aggression or to be bold in a common environment (Goodman & Cook, 2019).

Additionally, the non-significant association of subscales of adolescent attachment with all variables except the significant association of goal-corrected partnership with childhood trauma and behaviour problems was observed. The findings contradict with the existing literature (Frosch et al., 2021; Lai & Carr, 2018) explaining that a child's mind consider parental figure as an ultimate source of comfort and love. However, evidence (B. Liu et al., 2022) suggested that aggression faced by a child from a parental figure or caregiver enforces a child to develop aggression towards them. The strict parenting or ignited environment at home could leads to the disconnection between a child and parent that initiate a negative emotion in a child (Sarwar, 2016; Xing et al., 2017). As it is established that children learn what they see, the constant exposure to aggressiveness give rise to the negative and unstable emotions in a child that ultimately effects a child's relationship with their parents as well (Ogundele, 2018).

Similarly, the passiveness in a child's behaviour also subdues the child from seeking the affection and tends to develop a distance between them and their parents. Availability of parental figure reduces the chances of development of behaviour problems in children (Goldberg & Carlson, 2014). Whereas the findings provided a complete another perspective that explains the inability of parental availability in reducing or coping with the harms of maltreatment. The findings could be explained by the fact that partially, parental availability is the main source of their maltreatment (neglect and strict parenting). Another explanation could be the desire to be independent with the growing age diminished the need of parental guidance and availability. The illuminated world of independence and the pubertal change in a child fills the place of

parental affection and following belief system could be the cause of non-significant findings.

However, in contrast to the two subscales of adolescent attachment, goal corrected partnership that explains the empathic feelings of a child towards a children revealed a significant negative association. The findings are in lined with the previous study (Kirby, 2019) explaining that empathetic feelings towards parents could reduce or heal the impacts of maltreatment and prevents the involvement in behaviour problems. However, the non-significant findings of physical abuse could be explained with reference to the Pakistani culture, As discussed earlier physical battering or neglect, considered as part of child rearing have a great impact on child's cognition and it reduces the empathetic feeling of children towards a parental figure (Ubaidi, 2017). Non-significant association of externalizing behaviour problems with empathy towards parents is also demonstrated in literature (Goldberg & Carlson, 2014; Paz et al., 2021).

Based on the correlation analysis, prediction analysis was carried out. The findings revealed that childhood trauma significantly and positively predict behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems). However, adolescent's attachment revealed non-significant prediction for behaviour problems (internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems) except for the significant negative prediction of internalizing behaviour problems. The findings also supported the already mentioned indigenous explanations.

Furthermore, mediation analysis was also carried out to examine the mediating role of adolescent's attachment between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems (internalizing and total behaviour problems). The findings revealed significant negative and partial mediation of goal-corrected partnership between childhood maltreatment (emotional abuse, emotional neglect, and total childhood maltreatment) and internalizing behaviour problems (see Table 3). However, total behaviour problems revealed non-significant mediation (see Table 4). The present findings could be explained as total behaviour problems is the total score of internalizing and

externalizing behaviour problems so the existing of non-significant mediation could be the result of externalizing behaviour problems. Moreover, the non-significant findings could be explained through correlation results and Pakistani ideology of parenting.

Conclusion and Implications. The present study yielded the significance of goal corrected partnership (indicating child empathy with parents) in avoiding the adverse childhood experiences. The findings of the present research could be beneficial in both intervention-based programs as well as in theory building. The findings could further be utilized for the awareness among young adolescents to modify and reducing behaviour problems. The findings could promote the counsellors to explain the effectiveness of parental attachment in a child's life and could further use parental attachment in different counselling sessions and family therapies to provide a sense of support to young adolescent and make them realize that they can count on their relationship while going through drastic changes / events in their life. The present study further helps filling the literature gap and lack of knowledge regarding the uprising of maltreatment and behaviour problems in Pakistani society and help provide a baseline for future studies to explore the causes and beneficial helping programs.

Although the study results were generally consistent with previous literature, the study is not free of limitations. Future studies can focus on following potential limitations and fill the loop-holes in previous literature. The data was taken from only two cities so, the findings could not be generalized nationwide. The increase in data could differentiate the findings. Secondly, only parental attachment was examined in the present study, attachment with their relationships could provide different findings and provide better coping strategy. Considering these, the present study could form a baseline for better future studies.

The present research was carried out with the focus to understand the association between childhood maltreatment and behaviour problems and to examine the mediating role of parental attachment between childhood maltreatment and behaviour

problems in adolescents. The current study not just provides an insight about the harming impacts of childhood maltreatment but also provides a better opportunity to understand the parent-child attachment in a clear manner. The present study could help in the development of better society for the children and their bright future.

Declaration

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Conflict of interest

The authors are well informed and declared no competing interests.

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Ethical Approval

Formal ethical approval was taken from institutional ethical board to conduct this research.

Competing interest

The authors declare to have no competing interests.

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