Author’s response to reviews

Title: Consequences of Child Emotional Abuse, Emotional Neglect and Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence for Eating Disorders: A Systematic Critical Review

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Professor Phillipa Hay
Associate Editor, BMC Psychology


Dear Professor Hay,

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript for publication in BMC Psychology. We appreciate the time that the reviewers and you have spent on reviewing our manuscript and providing thoughtful, constructive comments. We have revised the manuscript based on the suggestions and concerns that were highlighted. These revisions and our responses to reviewer comments are outlined in more detail below.
Comment 1: I have reviewed the draft manuscript, without results or a discussion, titled, "Consequences of child emotional abuse, emotional neglect and exposure to intimate partner violence for eating disorders: A systematic critical review" by answering the three questions requested below: 1. Do the methods used allow the research question to be addressed appropriately? 2. Does the methodology appear to have been applied correctly? 3. Is sufficient detail provided to assess the soundness of the methodology? Answers to the three questions: 1. Yes, the methodology adopted in this paper follows best practice guidelines for conducting a systematic review. 2. Yes, relevant information is presented to ensure confidence in the correct application of the methodology. 3. Overall, the answer to this question is yes. The omissions that may be considered relate to issues of definition that may vary across studies. How will these varying definitions be identified and accommodated? How will the theoretical models be picked up in the identification of the literature? Will there be some key words relating to potential theories? What is the rationale for excluding all non-journal articles such as dissertations?

Thank you for the positive reflections on our manuscript. We are pleased to see that Reviewer #1 feels that our review follows best-practice methodology for conducting a systematic review and that the reviewer felt that our methodology was appropriately applied. In addition, we appreciate the Reviewer’s overall perception that we provided sufficient detail about the implementation of our methodology. With respect to the reviewer’s definitional concerns, we would like to note for the reviewer that our search strategy was informed by recent, available literature on search optimization and smart searching techniques. In implementing smart searching techniques, definitional variability of key concepts and terms can be captured through the purposeful utilization of index terms, as well as proximity operators.

To clarify, we have added the following text to the body of the manuscript (Methods Section, Identification of the Literature, page 8).

As per standard ‘smart search’ procedures, definitional variability of key concepts, constructs, or terms can be captured through the purposeful and strategic utilization of index terms and proximity operators [27]. In this regard, our search implemented the use of index terms (e.g., "mental disorders/", "child abuse/") in all databases to help ensure that definitional variations for our primary constructs (e.g. emotional abuse) were captured. Similarly, keywords were combined by proximity operators and were selected based on the test of a sample of articles that were eligible for inclusion in the review [27].

We also appreciate the Reviewer’s note about the need to justify the exclusion of dissertations and grey literature from the review. To address this concern, we have added the following text to the body of the manuscript (Methods Section, Study Selection Criteria, page 10).
Excluding dissertations and grey literature from the present review was a pragmatic decision and largely directed by the size of the returned database results. However, this decision is bolstered by recent evidence that suggests that the inclusion of grey literature, including dissertations, rarely alter the outcomes of quantitative syntheses [28].

Finally, it is important to note for this reviewer that our search terms and operators were not identified or implemented with the explicit purpose of identifying theoretical models used in the child maltreatment and eating disorder literature. Rather, our goal was to identify and synthesize the theoretical models that have been considered in the quantitative evidence examining the association between child emotional abuse, emotional neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence and adult eating pathology. Thus, the search strategy was conceptualized to identify the aforementioned quantitative literature and our extraction strategy included identifying and extracting any theoretical models considered in the identified and eligibly literature. To clarify, the following text was added to the body of the manuscript (Methods, Data Extraction, page 10)

With this information in mind, it is important to note that our search strategy was conceptualized and implemented so as to identify the quantitative literature investigating the association between the child maltreatment variables of interest and adult eating-related pathology. Our extraction strategy however, focused on identifying, collating and synthesizing information pertinent to the article characteristics described above. Notably, extraction of theoretical models took the form of identifying whether or not the authors explicitly stated that their study, research objectives, and/or analytical approach was informed by any previously published theoretical framework. In this regard, the name of the framework/model was extracted, the original authors of the framework/model was extracted, as was a description of the framework/model.

REVIEWER #2

Comment 1: I would like to have more detail about the findings of the review. There is more written about the method than the findings. Can you tell us more about what you found in your review and in more detail / analysis?

We thank this reviewer for their keenness to review the results of our review. As per the ‘results-free’ guidelines, the results and discussion sections of our abstract and manuscript were omitted from the submission. The present version includes the results of our review and a comprehensive discussion of the synthesized evidence.

Again, we appreciate the thoughtful comments provided by the review team and we strongly feel that their input has strengthened our paper. Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We look forward to hearing from the journal about the outcome of this resubmission.
Sincerely,

Melissa Kimber, Ph.D., R.S.W.

On behalf of all co-authors