Avoidance as a Mediating Mechanism Between Maladaptive Coping and PTSD Symptoms

Matthew. McNally[1], Donal. O'Connor[2], Kam Sheng. Yu[3*], Ikeagwu. Ugbeh-Johnson[4], Aleiia J.G. Pinto[5]

[1] Department of Clinical Health Psychology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada
[2] Department of Psychology, University of Regina, Regina, SK, Canada
[3] Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada
[4] School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
[5] Department of Psychology, Western University, London, ON, Canada

* Corresponding author email address: yu-kamsheng@umanitoba.ca

Editor	Reviewers
Shokouh Navabinejad Full Professor, Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada sh.navabinejad@kmanresce.ca	**Reviewer 1:** Joel Billieux Institute for Behavioural Addictions, Sigmund Freud University Vienna, Austria. Email: joelbillieux@sfu.ac.at **Reviewer 2:** Aman Ullah Chaudhary Department of Psychology, Haripur University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: amanullah@uoh.edu.pk

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The opening sentence "Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) remains one of the most debilitating psychological conditions…" is broad. Consider adding prevalence data from Canadian epidemiological studies to contextualize the study's national focus.

While international sources are cited extensively (e.g., Japan, Germany, Australia), there is no mention of Canadian PTSD or coping research. Adding Canadian studies would strengthen contextual relevance.

The article states, "maladaptive coping can be operationalized through subscales such as denial, substance use, behavioral disengagement, self-blame, and venting." Please specify which exact subscales were included in your computation and whether they were summed or averaged.

In paragraph 3 of the Discussion, you state "Our findings revealed that avoidance partially explained the relationship between maladaptive coping and PTSD severity…". This statement could be expanded to explain why avoidance only partially mediated the relationship and what other possible mediators might exist.

The limitations mention self-report bias and cross-sectional design. However, the reliance on convenience sampling is not fully problematized. State explicitly how this may bias toward more educated or internet-active individuals in the Canadian context.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

When referencing Weber & Lynch (2024), you state that "coping efficacy is particularly salient in populations exposed to chronic or repeated trauma." The link between coping efficacy and avoidance should be clarified here to directly connect with your study's mediator.

In the sentence "Avoidance specifically is central to PTSD both as a symptom and as a maladaptive strategy…" you present avoidance as both a diagnostic cluster and a coping style. To avoid conceptual overlap, clarify whether you conceptualize avoidance as behavioral, cognitive, or both in this study.

The text notes "Trauma exposure across diverse contexts continues to reveal the significance of maladaptive coping and avoidance…" but does not integrate how these findings lead to the Canadian adult sample rationale. The transition to your sample choice should be explicit.

While SEM was employed, no rationale is given for testing partial mediation instead of full mediation. Explain why partial mediation was hypothesized a priori.

The figure caption simply reads "Model with Beta Coefficients." Consider providing a clearer figure with standardized coefficients labeled on all paths and reporting R^2 values for endogenous variables.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.