Cognitive Avoidance as a Mediator Between Trauma Exposure and Emotional Numbing

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the first paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence "Despite extensive research into the consequences of trauma…" would benefit from a clearer transition toward the focus on cognitive avoidance. Consider elaborating on the gap in the literature more precisely.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence "Cognitive avoidance in these settings may provide short-term relief…" should define what constitutes "short-term relief" (e.g., in days, weeks?) and cite empirical findings on temporal effects of avoidance.

In the "Study Design and Participants" section, although the use of Morgan and Krejcie's table is noted, the authors should report the population size from which the 445 participants were sampled to verify sampling adequacy.

In the "Measures" section, under Emotional Numbing, the authors write "It contains 30 items, of which several directly correspond to Criterion D…" Consider specifying the exact number of items used in the analysis to clarify the operationalization of emotional numbing.

In Table 3, the model fit indices include AGFI, which is somewhat outdated. Consider including SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) as a more contemporary fit index.

In Table 4, the "indirect effect via CA" is labeled both as "indirect" and included in "total." This could confuse some readers. Consider adding a footnote clarifying that the total effect equals the sum of direct and indirect effects.

In the Discussion, the first paragraph summarizes results well, but it could benefit from mentioning the standardized beta coefficients, as the effect sizes (e.g., $\beta = .47$) are substantial and informative.

In the Discussion, the sentence "Cognitive avoidance may impair emotional engagement…" is compelling, but would be stronger if it linked back to specific findings in this sample (e.g., the $\beta = .47$ path from cognitive avoidance to emotional numbing).

In the Discussion, the authors state "emotional numbing is often overlooked…" This important observation would be enhanced by suggesting why it may be overlooked in standard PTSD assessments or research.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2.   Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the second paragraph of the Introduction, the phrase "emotional numbing is thought to represent a maladaptive regulatory response…" should be strengthened by including a citation from affect regulation theory to ground this conceptualization.

In the fourth paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence "This failure to emotionally and cognitively process the trauma…" would be improved by clarifying whether this claim is supported by longitudinal or cross-sectional studies.

In the "Measures" section, under Cognitive Avoidance, the sentence "Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale…" would benefit from mentioning whether the CAQ was translated or validated in Greek, given the study's setting.

In the "Measures" section, under Trauma Exposure, the authors state that the LEC-5 is "primarily a screening tool." Given this, did the study apply any follow-up diagnostic assessments to validate self-reported trauma exposure?

In the Data Analysis section, the sentence "Skewness and kurtosis values ranged between -0.63 and 0.87…" should specify which variable had the highest and lowest values to provide more clarity.

In Table 1, the mean of emotional numbing (M = 6.14) is relatively low given the maximum possible on CAPS-5. The authors should discuss the clinical relevance of this mean in the Findings section.

In Table 2, although all correlations are statistically significant, the manuscript should mention whether multicollinearity was assessed between predictors before SEM modeling.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2.   Revised

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