Exploration of How Health Anxiety and Media Exposure Predict Preventive Health Actions

Andreea. Popescu[1], Mariana. Nikolova[2*], Sharmin. Nasrin[3]

[1] Department of Health Psychology, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
[2] Department of Family Counseling, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria
[3] Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

* **Corresponding author email address**: m.nikolova@nbu.bg

Editor	Reviewers
Seyed Hamid Atashpour	**Reviewer 1:** Abolghasem Khoshkanesh
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran	Assistant Professor, Counseling Department, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.
hamidatashpour@gmail.com	Email: akhoshkonesh@sbu.ac.ir
	Reviewer 2: Thseen Nazir
	Professor of Psychology and Counseling Department, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey.
	Email: thseen.nazir@ihu.edu.tr

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the last paragraph of the Introduction, the statement "Given this background, the present study aims to explore…" could benefit from a clearer articulation of specific research hypotheses or questions to guide the reader and align with best practices in empirical research structure.

In the Measures section, under Preventive Health Behaviors, while citing Schwarzer and Renner (2000), the authors should mention the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the scale obtained in this specific study to support its use.

In the Health Anxiety subsection, the explanation of the SHAI structure is sound, but it would strengthen methodological transparency to report the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) observed within this study's sample.

Under Media Exposure, the authors cite the MESH scale but do not report its internal consistency (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) for the Bulgarian sample. Including this would validate the psychometric integrity of the scale in this context.

In the Data Analysis section, the description "assumptions for linear regression… were tested and confirmed" is vague. It would be methodologically stronger to provide exact statistical values (e.g., VIF, tolerance, skewness, kurtosis) rather than summarizing qualitatively.

In the Findings section, Table 1 is introduced effectively, but the following paragraph would benefit from a more comparative interpretation. For instance, how do these mean scores compare with previous studies from other regions or similar pandemics?

The statement in the Discussion that "These findings align with a growing body of literature…" should be strengthened by referencing specific studies that tested similar models with regression analysis, not just correlations.

The discussion on emotional burden (e.g., "media exposure and health anxiety… may also interact…") would benefit from more elaboration on interaction terms. The article mentions a potential synergy, but no interaction effects were tested in the regression.

The Discussion section could be significantly enriched by incorporating theories such as the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) or Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which could provide a stronger conceptual interpretation of how anxiety and media exposure shape behavior.

The sentence "Interestingly, the Bulgarian context may provide a unique lens…" could be expanded by discussing Bulgaria's media environment or public trust levels to contextualize the findings culturally.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2.   Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In Table 2, it would enhance interpretability if confidence intervals for the Pearson correlation coefficients were included, especially given the public health implications.

In the Results section, the sentence "Prior to conducting the regression analysis, assumptions of normality…" could be improved by briefly discussing the decision-making criteria (e.g., threshold p-values) for accepting assumptions.

In Table 3, the authors provide R and R^2 values, but they should explicitly interpret the adjusted R^2 (0.29) in the paragraph—does this represent a strong, moderate, or weak predictive capacity in this domain?

In the second paragraph of the Discussion, the sentence "media… serves as a primary source of information during health crises" should be supplemented with cross-national data to support the generalizability of this claim.

In the Limitations section, the authors mention self-report bias but do not consider non-response bias due to online sampling. This should be addressed explicitly, particularly given the potential digital divide in Bulgaria.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2.   Revised

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