

Pandemic-related adversity and distress: A longitudinal investigation of psychological flexibility as a mediator

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Poster presented by [Manny S. Stegall](#).

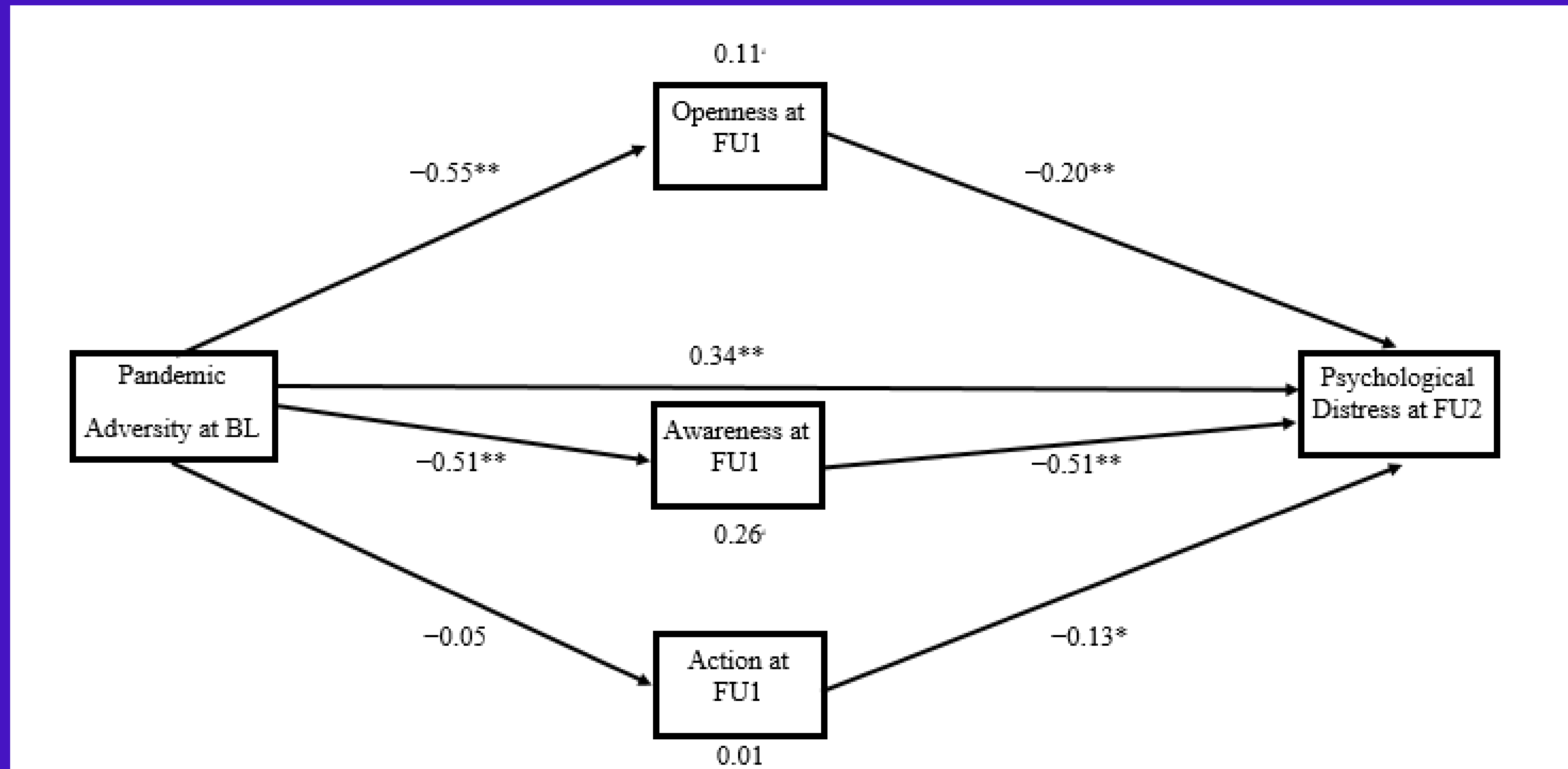
BACKGROUND:

- COVID-19 related hardship and distress have demonstrated a strong positive association with one another (Pierce et al., 2020)
- A potential mediator of this relationship is psychological flexibility (Hernandez-Lopez et al., 2021)

METHOD:

- Participants were recruited via Mturk in May 2020 (n = 485), with follow-up in June (n = 360) and July (n = 265) 2020
- Pandemic adversity was measured via self-report
- Psychological flexibility components (Openness to Experience, Behavioral Awareness, Valued Action; CompACT) and psychological distress (K10) were collected via self-report
- Parallel mediation was conducted in SPSS using the PROCESS macro

Behavioral awareness and openness to experience mediate the relation between pandemic adversity and distress



Unstandardized coefficients for the association between pandemic adversity at baseline and psychological distress at two-month follow-up while controlling for participant age. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .001$, c = 95% CI does not include zero. Pandemic Adversity = PAM Score. Openness = Openness to Experience subscale of CompACT. Awareness = Behavioral Awareness subscale of the CompACT. Action = Valued Action subscale of the CompACT. Psychological Distress = K10 Score

RESULTS

- Pandemic adversity significantly predicted distress at the two-month follow-up time point ($\beta = 0.34$, SE = .07, 95% CI: [0.22, 0.47], $t(259) = 5.34$, $p < .001$)
- An indirect effect of pandemic adversity on persistent distress operated through:
 - Increased Openness to Experience ($\beta = 0.11$, Boot SE = 0.03, CI: [0.05, 0.19])
 - Increased Behavioral Awareness ($\beta = 0.26$, Boot SE = 0.06, CI: [0.15, 0.39])
 - But not through Valued Action ($\beta = 0.01$, Boot SE = .01, 95% CI: [-.01, .03])

DISCUSSION

- Given negative psychological outcomes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to identify transdiagnostic processes as targets for intervention
- ACT may be an appropriate intervention to develop effective coping styles amidst adversity
- Future research should focus on developing ACT interventions aimed at preventing the development of psychological distress following objective hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other adversity



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