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The Effects of Resilience, Mindfulness, and Experiential Avoidance on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Symptoms: Exploring the Mechanism of Action of a Mindfulness App for College Student Military Veterans with PTSD

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The Effects of Resilience, Mindfulness, and Experiential Avoidance on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Symptoms: Exploring the Mechanism of Action of Mindfulness App for College Student Military Veterans with PTSD



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Introduction

- Influx of military veterans returning to college¹
- College student veterans: higher prevalence of PTSD than in the general population and military population^{2,5}
- PTSD of college student veterans: associated with poor academic performance, substance abuse, depression and suicide attempts. ^{s,6-9}
- Mindfulness has shown to improve PTSD¹⁰⁻¹²
- Resilience: protective factor against PTSD^{13,17}
- Experiential avoidance exacerbates PTSD^{1,5-22}
- Limited research that integrates the established relationships of resilience, mindfulness, experiential avoidance, and PTSD into one model
- To investigate the moderating effect of resilience on the relationship between mindfulness and PTSD.
- To determine the indirect effect of mindfulness on PTSD through experiential avoidance as a mediator.

Methods

- Cross-sectional study design
- Online survey (Qualtrics)
- Convenience sample of 133 college student veterans from UNLV
- Information about the study was emailed through the UNLV Military and Veteran Services Center
- Inclusion criteria: 18 years old or older, UNLV student, and previous active military service
- Four main measures: resilience, mindfulness, experiential avoidance, and PTSD
- Inferential statistical models and moderation models^{23,24}

Results

- Participants' mean age: 30.9 (SD=8.89)
- Male (63.9%); Female (36.1%)
- Females had higher resilience than males ($t = 2.29, p = 0.023$)
- Significant correlations between mindfulness, experiential avoidance, resilience, and PTSD:
 - Mindfulness & PTSD: $-.617$ ($p < .001$)
 - Mindfulness & resilience: $.462$ ($p < .001$)
 - Mindfulness & experiential avoidance: $-.610$ ($p < .001$)
 - Resilience & PTSD: $-.277$ ($p < .001$)
 - Resilience & experiential avoidance: $-.581$ ($p < .001$)
 - Experiential avoidance & PTSD: $.698$ ($p < .001$)
- Overall model suggested a relatively good explanation of variance ($R^2=0.77$) and was significant ($F=46.50, p < 0.0001$)
- Significant direct effect of mindfulness on PTSD ($t = -4.73, p < 0.0001$).
- Mindfulness had a significant indirect effect on PTSD through experiential avoidance ($t = 6.86, p < 0.001$).
- Resilience had a significant moderating effect between mindfulness and PTSD as mediated by experiential avoidance

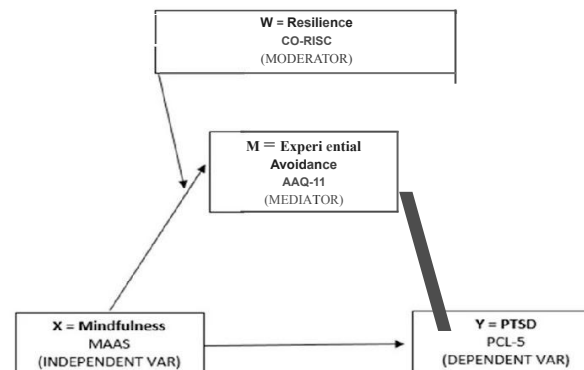
Discussion

- Higher level of resilience in female veterans warrant further investigation²⁵
- Direct effect of mindfulness on PTSD:
 - Improve mindfulness in order to improve PTSD
- Mediating effect of experiential avoidance:
 - Reduce use of experiential avoidance in order to improve PTSD
- Moderating effect of resilience:
 - Higher resilience, less use of experiential avoidance
 - Improving mindfulness can bolster resilience

Conclusions/Future Research

- Enhancing resilience may boost the effect of mindfulness-based interventions on PTSD
- Mindfulness-based interventions for PTSD should focus on improving experiential avoidance and mindfulness as starting points
- Future research
 - How resilience influence specific aspects of mindfulness and experiential avoidance
 - Test the relationships of these variables in a mindfulness app for college student veterans with PTSD
- Limitations:
 - Convenience sampling, cross-sectional design, single-factor structure of mindfulness measure

Mediation/Moderation Model



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References

References cited in the poster are available at:
www.bit.ly/studentvetsposter