

Understanding Resilience as a Mediator
on Mindfulness and Burnout

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Abstract

Resilience is a protective factor that allows an individual to overcome adversity such as trauma and large workloads. Resilience has been heavily studied both from the viewpoint of its countering effects to unfavorable outcomes and its relation to personality and other intraindividual variables. Mindfulness is one intraindividual trait that has been previously shown to be positively related to resilience. Mindfulness has also been negatively related to measures of psychological adjustment such as burnout. Past studies have failed to evaluate the relationship between these as resilience may mediate these relationships. A model was proposed by Rees et al. (2015) to explain resilience as a mediator between these intraindividual variables and psychological adjustment. The current study seeks to evaluate one portion of this model utilizing mindfulness and burnout. Participants will complete a survey consisting of the Brief Resilience Scale, the Mindfulness Skill Scale, the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, and demographic information. Testing this portion of the workforce resilience model will help to illustrate how resilience acts on these relationships and the underlying processes towards a more complete theory on resilience.

Summary

Background

Resilience is an extremely intriguing area of research and has been conceptualized in many ways such as a trait, a continuum, a category, and a process (Jackson et al., 2007). Overall, resilience is described as the tendency to overcome adversity, such as workload, lack of autonomy, and safety issues. While resilience has been identified as negatively associated with several negative outcomes, such as depression, little work has investigated the theoretical underpinnings of how resilience functions (Hjemdal et al., 2011). Rees et al. (2015) suggested a model whereby resilience acts as a mediator between intrapersonal variables and psychological adjustment.

One of the main intrapersonal factors identified by Rees et al. (2015) is mindfulness. Mindfulness is a trait that involves regulating attention to the present moment and maintaining a mindset of curiosity and openness to experience (Bishop et al., 2004). Mindfulness has been shown in prior research to be positively associated with multiple positive effects on physical and mental health such as reduced pain and lower anxiety (Glomb et al., 2011). While mindfulness has been studied extensively, there is still conflict in research if mindfulness may be better conceptualized as a skill rather than a trait (Stremic, 2020).

Burnout is a major measure of psychological adjustment that is most often characterized by the emotional exhaustion it causes (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout has been defined as multidimensional, consisting of three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. While there is a general consensus that these three dimensions are separate and must be considered so, recent work has argued for the use of burnout as a unidimensional variable (Brennkmeijer & VanYperen, 2003). While burnout itself is unfavorable, burnout is also associated with other negative outcomes such as insomnia (Khamisa et al., 2015).

Past studies have found that mindfulness training has led to lower scores of burnout and that mindfulness is negatively correlated with each of the aspects of burnout (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Bendetto & Swadling, 2014; Goodman & Schorling, 2012). Mindfulness has also been positively associated with resilience in several studies (Keye & Pidgeon, 2013; Montero-Marín et al., 2015). The effect of resilience on burnout is still unclear as studies show mixed results (McCain et al., 2018; Rushton et al., 2015). Based on these results and Rees et al.'s (2015) model, I propose a study to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Resilience is negatively associated with (a) overall burnout, (b) exhaustion, (c) cynicism, and (d) professional self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2: Resilience mediates the relationship between mindfulness and (a) overall burnout, (b) exhaustion, (c) cynicism, and (d) professional efficacy.

Participants

250 undergraduate students will be recruited from Middle Tennessee State University.

Materials and Procedure

Participants will first complete a survey collecting demographic information. Participants will complete the Brief Resilience Scale to measure resiliency (Smith et al., 2008). To evaluate mindfulness, participants will complete the Mindfulness Skill Scale and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006). Burnout will be evaluated using the Maslach Burnout Inventory for students (Maslach, et al., 1996). To reduce the risk of order effects, the administration of these measures will be randomized across participants. Participants will be asked demographic information followed by debriefing. Data will be analyzed using Preacher and Hayes' (2012) process model in SPSS.

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