

Title: PTSD Symptom Clusters and Depression Among College Sexual Assault Survivors

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INTRODUCTION

- About one in five female students experience campus sexual assault (CSA)
- The comorbidity rate of PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder is about 50%
- Due to this high overlap, identifying a specific subscale of PTSD that predicts depression could help improve treatment efficacy
- Few studies have studied how specific PTSD symptom clusters relate to depressive symptoms among students who have experienced
- **Hypotheses**
 1. PTSD will mediate the relationships between CSA and depressive symptoms
 2. Specifically, avoidance and hyperarousal PTSD symptoms will be the strongest mediators between CSA and depressive symptoms

METHODS

- N = 684 undergraduate students recruited from a random selection of 1200 students from a small liberal arts college in the Northeast and from MTurk
- **Measures**
 - The Sexual Contact Scale (similar to Koss & Gidycz, 1985) assessed experience of CSA
 - PTSD symptoms were assessed using the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (Weathers et al., 2013)
 - Depressive symptoms were assessed by Beck's Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1961)
- **Analyses**
 - Using the Process add-on for SPSS (Hayes, 2013), we tested 2 models:
 - 1) mediating effect of total PTSD symptoms on depressive symptoms among CSA survivors
 - 2) unique effects of specific PTSD symptom clusters on depressive symptoms among CSA survivors
 - Controls: gender

RESULTS

- **Hypotheses were partially supported**
 - PTSD mediated the relationship between CSA and depressive symptoms (Indirect effect = 2.33; 95% CI [2.37, 3.77])
 - When controlling for other subscales, only hyperarousal symptoms was a significant mediator (Indirect effect = 0.47; 95% CI [0.04, 0.91])

DISCUSSION

- **Summary: PTSD hyperarousal symptoms explain the link between CSA and depressive symptoms**
- Treatment for college sexual assault survivors should focus on treating hyperarousal symptoms, which could help treat both PTSD and depression.

References available upon request.

PTSD hyperarousal symptoms predict depressive symptoms among college sexual assault survivors.

