

Examining Student Well-Being: Development and Initial Validation of the Psychological Vulnerability and Hardiness Scale

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Abstract

Background: Stress is a significant concern for undergraduate students, with some experiencing clinical levels of distress. Psychological vulnerability and hardiness are constructs that evaluate an individual's sensitivity to stressors and protective factors related to maladaptive responses to distress. However, no measure has been developed to assess their combined effect.

Method: The present study examined the factor structure and correlates of the Psychological Vulnerability and Hardiness Scale (PVHS) in two samples (i.e., traditional university students and student veterans). Items were created through focus groups with occupational therapists who have experience assessing both constructs in university students. Factor structure and model fit were evaluated using statistical analyses (i.e., confirmatory factor analysis), while convergent and divergent validity was assessed with five established measures.

Results: The PVHS exhibited strong internal consistency and factor loadings, which demonstrated its psychometric reliability. The hardiness subscale exhibited strong negative correlations with state and trait anxiety, depression, and psychosocial functioning, and strong positive correlations with measures of hardiness and resilience. The psychological vulnerability subscale demonstrated strong positive correlations with psychosocial functioning, anxiety, and depression, and negative correlations with hardiness and resilience.

Conclusion: The PVHS is a valid, parsimonious measure of hardiness and psychological vulnerability. The PVHS may contribute to the understanding of the relationship between stress and well-being and have clinical utility for college or university counseling centers to help promote student well-being. Future studies should utilize longitudinal designs with a diverse age

population to understand how psychological hardiness and vulnerability are expressed during stressful situations.

Keywords: undergraduates, confirmatory factor analysis, hardiness, psychological vulnerability, assessment, stress.