



Experiential Avoidance as a Partial Mediator of Emotion Dysregulation In Inpatient Adolescents



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Background

Emotion dysregulation is a central characteristic of borderline personality disorder (BPD; Glen & Klonsky, 2009), and is associated with experiential avoidance (Hayes et al., 2004). Individuals with BPD report higher levels of experiential avoidance compared with controls (Chapman, Dixon-Gordon & Walters, 2011). These relations raise the question whether experiential avoidance mediates the relation between BPD and emotion dysregulation.

Aims

First, to determine whether adolescents who meet criteria for BPD would report increased emotion dysregulation and experiential avoidance. Second, to evaluate the role of experiential avoidance as a mediator in the relation between BPD and emotion dysregulation.

Participants

$N = 208$ adolescents recruited from an inpatient unit (M age = 15.96, SD = 1.39; females = 60.1%) of which 60 (28.8%) met diagnostic criteria for BPD.

Measures

BPD was assessed using the CI-BPD (Zanarini, 2003). Experiential avoidance was assessed using the AFQ-Y (Greco, Lambert, & Baer, 2008), and emotion dysregulation was assessed using the DERS (Gratz & Roemer, 2008).

Results

The BPD group scored significantly higher on the AFQ ($t = -6.66, p < .001$) and DERS total score ($t = -6.30, p < .001$), indicating higher EA and emotion dysregulation. Mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986) analyses revealed that EA mediated the relation between BPD and emotion dysregulation.

Table 1. Comparison of groups

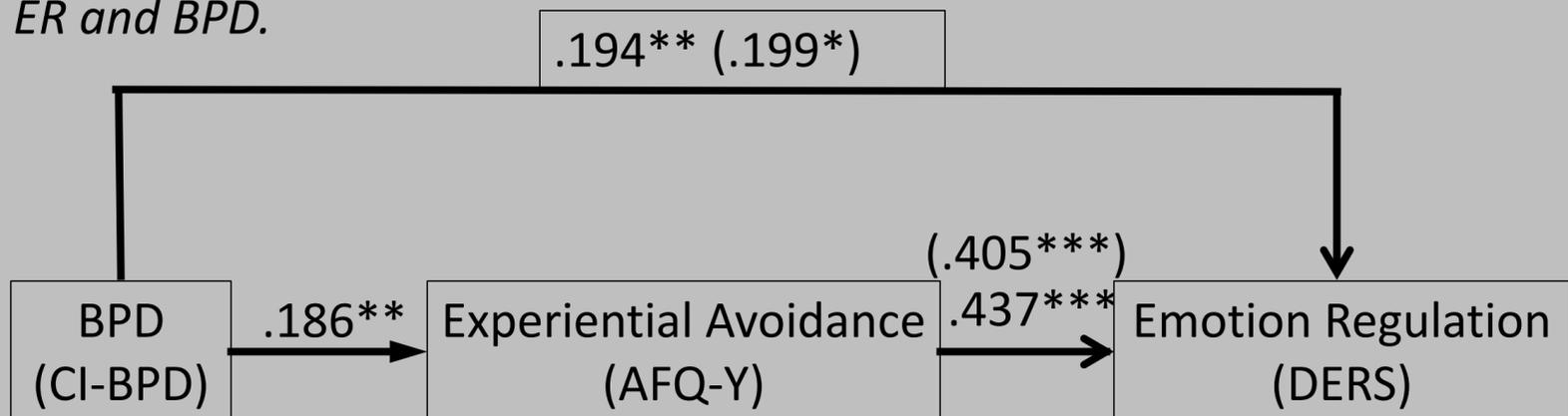
	No BPD	BPD	<i>t</i>
AFQ-Y total	24.20 (12.04)	35.13 (13.96)	-5.66*
DERS total	95.30 (26.57)	120.48 (25.03)	-6.30*

* $p < .001$

Conclusions

EA may be an important target of treatments seeking to minimize emotion dysregulation in BPD. Moreover, these results suggest that the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions for BPD (e.g., DBT) may partly lie in their ability to decrease EA and therefore emotion dysregulation - a core feature of BPD.

Figure 1. Experiential avoidance as a mediator of the relation between ER and BPD.



Note. Values on each path are standardized β values and coefficients inside parentheses are standardized partial regression coefficients from equations that include both variables with direct effects on the dependent variable. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.