

Improvements in Mindfulness and Psychological Flexibility in Adults Living with Serious Mental Illness in a Multimodal Residential Program

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QUESTION

Can mindfulness-based interventions enhance broad cognitive functions in adults living with serious mental illness (SMI)?

CONCLUSION

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) may facilitate improvements in mindfulness and psychological flexibility skills among adults living with SMI receiving multimodal care in a residential treatment setting.

BACKGROUND

- Meta-analytic reviews of mindfulness-based interventions in adults living with serious mental illness (SMI) have demonstrated promising treatment effects (Goldberg et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2018).
- Few studies have examined how mindfulness-based interventions might enhance broad cognitive functions such as psychological flexibility in adults with SMI (Wielgosz et al., 2019).
- This study involved patients admitted to Mayo Clinic's John E. Herman Home and Treatment Facility, a residential treatment program for adults living with SMI that delivers ACT as one of its primary interventions.

METHOD

Procedure

- Participants attended a daily ACT psychotherapy group covering core processes of psychological flexibility (e.g., opening up, being present, and doing what matters).
- Analyses explored changes in self-reported levels of mindfulness and psychological flexibility from admission to discharge.

Participants

- Patients included 23 adults (M=30.57, SD=10.05) who were primarily Caucasian (95.7%) and male (65.2%) with an average length of stay of 12 weeks.
- Patients completed demographic questions along with the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006) and the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (Bond et al., 2011).

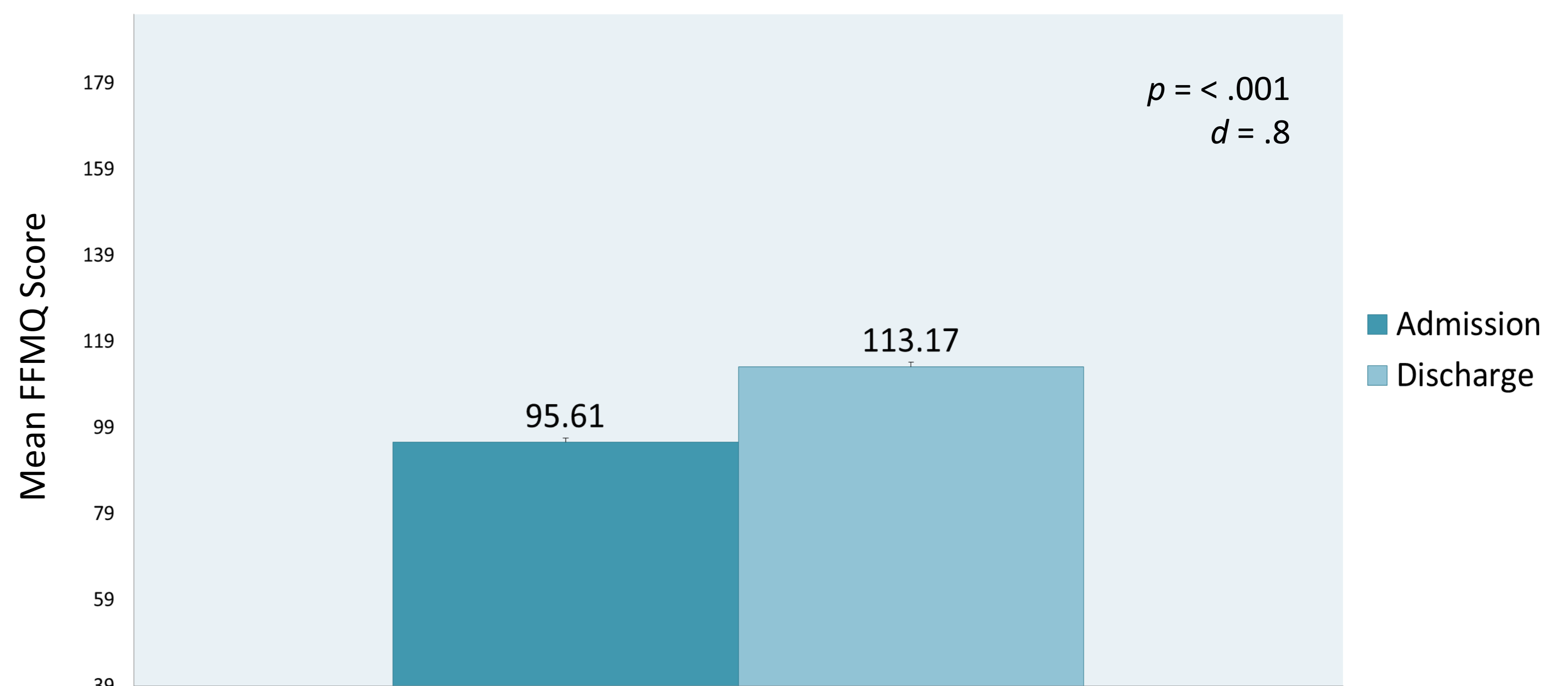
Measures

- **Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; 39 items)**
*"In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting."
"I watch my feelings without getting lost in them."*
- **Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II; 7 items)**
*"My painful memories prevent me from having a fulfilling life."
"Worries get in the way of my success."*

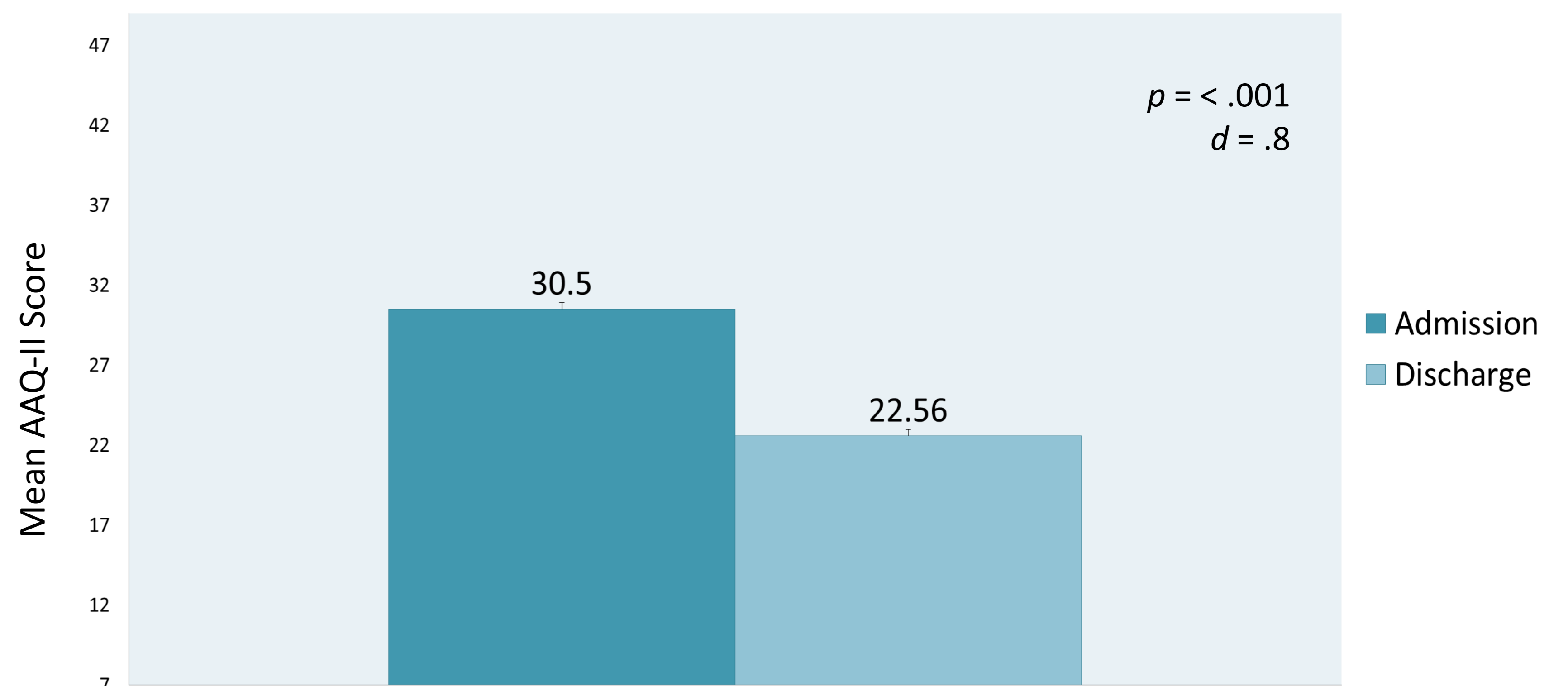


RESULTS

Change in Mindfulness (FFMQ)



Change in Psychological Inflexibility (AAQ-II)



Paired sample t-test indicated significant increases in levels of mindfulness, paired- $t(18) = 3.21$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .8$, and psychological flexibility, paired- $t(16) = 2.42$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .8$, from pre-treatment to post-treatment. Error bars represent standard error of the mean.

CONCLUSIONS

- Results suggest that ACT may facilitate improvements in mindfulness and psychological flexibility skills among adults living with SMI receiving multimodal care in a residential treatment setting.
- Adults living with SMI can benefit from developing a mindful awareness of the present moment in order to allow the possibility of observing the function of thoughts and behaviors relative to stated goals and values.
- ACT and other mindfulness-based approaches can foster cognitive flexibility, which helps adults with SMI disengage from the struggle associated with distressing symptoms and experiences (e.g., cognitive and/or experiential avoidance).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Future research is needed to evaluate potential program benefits over and above symptom management such as increased patient engagement in functional activities, vocational activities, and reduced psychiatric hospitalization.
- Recommended areas of future study include patient-level outcomes (e.g., vocational status, hours worked weekly, and biomarkers), cost-effectiveness, and stakeholders' qualitative feedback (e.g., program satisfaction and service quality).

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