

Perception of Tinnitus: Direct and Indirect Effects of Resilience, Personality Traits, and Psychiatric Symptoms

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This study, published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology*, delved into the complex interplay of psychological factors and tinnitus perception. The researchers aimed to understand how resilience, personality traits, and psychiatric symptoms might influence how individuals experience tinnitus, specifically its severity, annoyance, and perceived loudness.

Key Findings:

- **Resilience and Tinnitus Annoyance:** While resilience didn't significantly impact tinnitus severity or perceived loudness, it did have a direct effect on how annoying patients found their tinnitus. This suggests that individuals with greater resilience may be better equipped to cope with the emotional burden of tinnitus, even if the underlying sound itself remains unchanged.
- **Neuroticism and Tinnitus Perception:** The study found a strong association between neuroticism (a personality trait characterised by anxiety, worry, and emotional instability) and both tinnitus severity and annoyance. Individuals high in neuroticism tended to perceive their tinnitus as more severe and distressing, highlighting the significant role of personality in shaping the tinnitus experience.
- **Limited Role of Psychiatric Symptoms:** Contrary to expectations, the study did not find a direct or indirect influence of anxiety and depression on tinnitus severity, annoyance, or loudness. This finding may seem counterintuitive given the high prevalence of psychiatric comorbidities in tinnitus patients. However, it emphasises the need for further research to fully understand the complex relationship between mental health and tinnitus perception.

Implications for Clinical Practice:

- **Personalised Treatment:** The study underscores the importance of a personalised approach to tinnitus management. Recognising the influence of personality traits like neuroticism can help clinicians tailor treatment strategies, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or mindfulness techniques, to address the specific needs of each patient.
- **Focus on Resilience:** Cultivating resilience in tinnitus patients may be a valuable therapeutic goal. Interventions that promote self-efficacy, coping skills, and positive self-perception could potentially help individuals manage tinnitus-related distress more effectively.
- **Further Investigation:** While this study provides valuable insights, further research is needed to fully understand the interplay between psychological factors, tinnitus characteristics, and treatment outcomes. Longitudinal studies and larger sample sizes would be beneficial to strengthen the findings and inform more targeted interventions.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of tinnitus perception, emphasising the importance of considering psychological factors beyond just the auditory experience itself. By acknowledging the influence of resilience, personality traits, and individual coping mechanisms, clinicians can provide more comprehensive and effective care for patients with tinnitus.