

Introduction

This study furthered previous research on adjustment in college students by incorporating multiple other socially relevant variables such as COVID-19 vaccination status and hesitancy, and military affiliation.

Prior Research

- Military children are more prone to aggressive outbursts than non-military children (Zakarian & McDevitt-Murphy, 2022; Klostermann et al., 2012; Reinhardt et al., 2019; Crow & Seybold, 2013).
- Military-affiliated individuals establish essential coping mechanisms and resilience more so than their non-affiliated peers (Tunac De Pedro et al., 2011).
- American military has been primarily Republican in choosing a political party (Oliver et al., 2021; Park, 2020; Lovell & Stiehm, 1989; Foy & Restifo, 2018).

Implications

- This study will further research in the fields of military psychology, political psychology, and public health.
- This research is extremely relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be able to describe not only personal and political attitudes toward the vaccine itself, but also rates of vaccination across different demographic groups of students at this point in time.

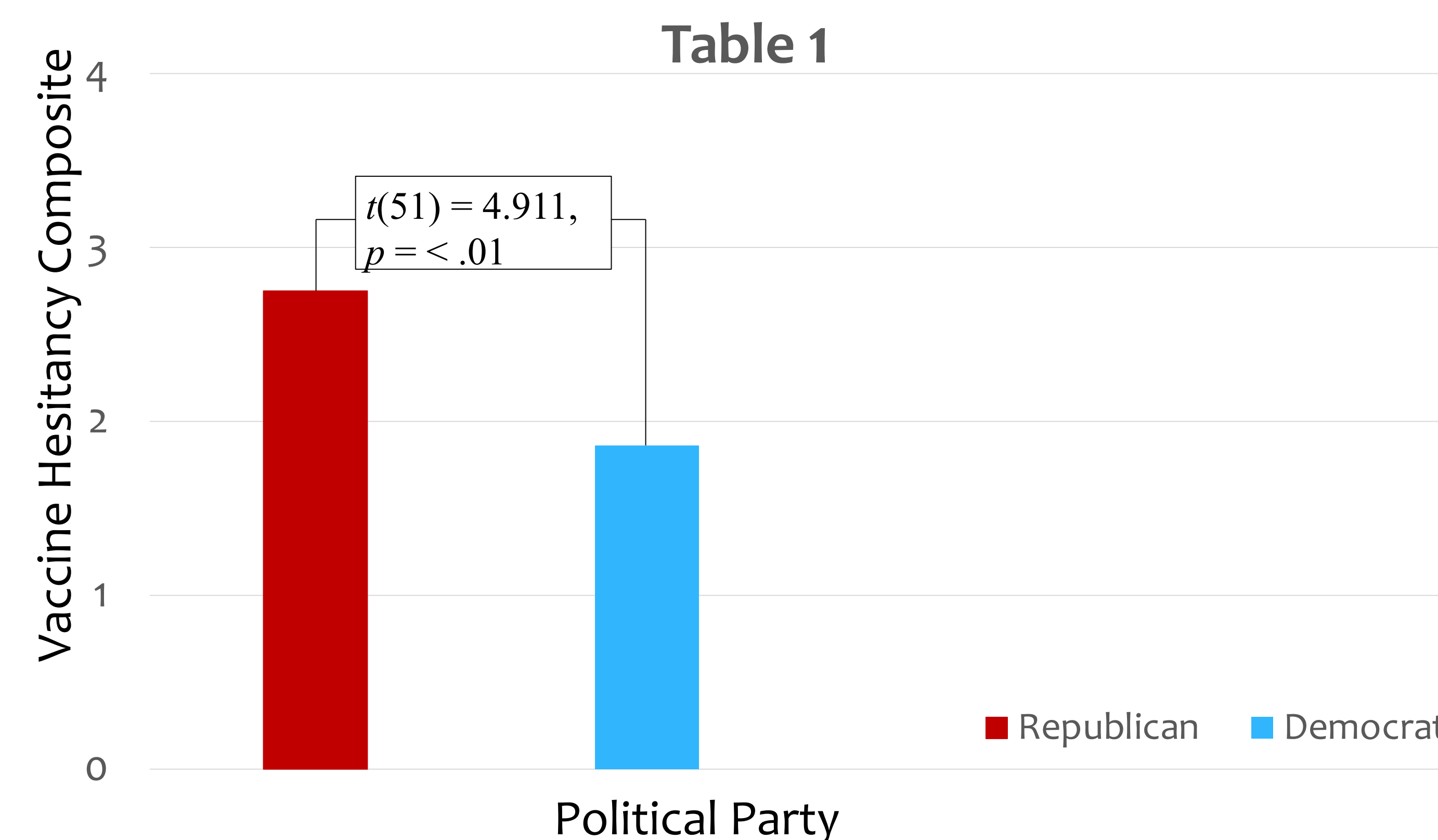
Hypotheses / Research Questions

- Military-affiliated students will have higher rates of vaccine hesitancy and will report more pressure to get the COVID-19 vaccine than non-affiliated students.
- Republican students will have lower rates of vaccination and higher rates of vaccine hesitancy than Democratic students.
- The military-affiliated group will be made up of more Republican participants than Democratic participants.
- Do military-affiliated students have higher levels of aggression than non-affiliated students?
- Do military-affiliated students have less empathetic tendencies than non-affiliated students?
- Do military-affiliated students have better adjustment to college than non-affiliated students?

Method

- **Participants**
- Sample of Coastal Carolina University undergraduate students ($N = 75$)
- Age: $M = 20.1$ years, $SD = 1.98$, range 18 – 31 years
- Gender: 57.3 % female, 40 % male
- Class Rank: 49.3 % freshmen, 12 % sophomores, 17.3 % juniors, 20 % seniors
- Race: 72 % White, 9.3 % Black, 10.7 % Hispanic/Latinx, 5.3 % Other
- Military Affiliation: 56 % affiliated, 42.7 % non-affiliated
 - 50.67% affiliated personally, 5.33% affiliated through parent(s)/sibling(s), 56% non-affiliated
- Political Party: 44 % Republican, 26.7 % Democrat, 25.3 % Other
- **Procedure**
- The study was offered as a self-reporting online survey through the SONA Research Participation System.
- The survey consisted of 53 questions total, divided into 8 sections, with the last section being focused on demographic information.
- Demographic information collected included military affiliation, gender, race, age, class rank, GPA, vaccination status, and political party affiliation.
- Other sections included:
 - Vaccination Hesitancy: 5 items, $\alpha = .794$ (Woko, Siegel, & Hornik, 2020)
 - Empathetic Tendencies: 17 items, $\alpha = .718$ (Queirós et al., 2018)
 - Aggressive Tendencies: 7 items, $\alpha = .718$ (Borah et al., 2021)
 - Adjustment to College: 14 items, $\alpha = .823$ (Garriott et al., 2020)

Results



To determine whether there were differences in vaccine hesitancy depending on political party affiliation, an independent-samples t test was conducted. The results of this analysis indicated that Republican students ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .703$) reported significantly more vaccine hesitancy than Democratic students ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .515$) $t(51) = 4.911$, $p < .01$.

Results

Average Composite Scores

- Aggression: $M = 1.495$, $SD = .388$, range 1.00 – 4.00
- Empathy: $M = 3.074$, $SD = .316$, range 1.00 – 4.00
- Adjustment: $M = 3.228$, $SD = .480$, range 1.00 – 4.00,
- Vaccine Hesitancy: $M = 2.373$, $SD = .753$, range 1.00 – 4.00

Independent-Samples t Tests

- Vaccine Hesitancy & Military Affiliation: $t(72) = -.648$, $p = .26$
- Vaccine Hesitancy & Political Party: $t(51) = 4.911$, $p < .01$
- Military Affiliation & Aggression: $t(72) = 1.214$, $p = .114$
- Military Affiliation & Empathy: $t(72) = -.696$, $p = .244$
- Military Affiliation & Adjustment: $t(72) = -1.931$, $p = .029$

Chi Square Tests

- Vaccination Rates & Military Affiliation: $X^2(1, 74) = 5.411$, $p = .02$
- Military Affiliation & Forced to get vaccine: $X^2(1, 57) = 11.858$, $p < .01$
- Military Affiliation & Political Party: $X^2(2, 71) = 5.324$, $p = .07$

Discussion

- Overall, participants averaged moderately low aggression, moderately high empathy, high adjustment, and moderate vaccine hesitancy.
- Republicans have repeatedly shown increased COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy when compared with Democrats (Brunson et al, 2021; Milligan et al., 2021; Pink et al., 2021), and that was similarly found in this study, as Republicans averaged 2.75 and Democrats 1.85 on the vaccine hesitancy composite.
- While Republican COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy was higher than the Democrats, Republicans in the current study expressed a significantly higher number of actual vaccinations (22/57 vs 18/57).
 - While significant, there were overall more Republicans (44%) in the study than Democrats (26.7%), which may point to the unexpected vaccination rate results.
- Military-affiliated students have developed essential coping mechanisms to navigate their unique situations, increasing their resiliency and, in turn, their adjustment skills (Tunac De Pedro et al., 2011). This seems correlates with the current study, as military-affiliated participants scored significantly higher on the adjustment composite than their non-affiliated peers (3.33 vs 3.12).
- The American military has been unofficially Republican for years now, based on self-reports from veterans and active members alike (Oliver et al., 2021; Park, 2020; Lovell & Stiehm, 1989; Foy & Restifo, 2018). The current study found marginally significant evidence of the same trend, as Republican participants made up 20 of the 40 military-affiliated participants and Democrats contributed only 7.