

## ABSTRACT

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Anxiety is among the most common mental illnesses in the United States. In December of 2020, 36.9% of adults reported an anxiety disorder along with psychosomatic/psychiatric symptoms. Following year one of the COVID-19 pandemic, reported anxiety rose by 25%. There are several non-traditional therapeutic methods that have shown promise for anxiety reduction, however, aromatherapy was of interest in this study. Aromatherapy with lavender essential oil predicts anxiolytic effects; yet, isolating the main constituent of lavender oil (the monoterpene linalool) has not been studied. We conducted an experimental study isolating and testing linalool as a botanical anxiolytic among college students and potential moderators complementary and alternative medicine beliefs (CAM) and spiritual well-being (SWB). Twenty-four participants were randomly assigned to either inhale linalool, or inhale water after they were exposed to a stressor (public speaking). Participants reported individual difference factors (i.e., personality, CAM beliefs, SWB, trait anxiety, and affect) and physiological measurements (i.e., blood pressure, heart rate, and blood oxygen saturation) were collected (pre-stressor, post-stressor, and post-inhalation). Traditional statistical significance was not achieved due to the small sample size; however, a consistent anxiolytic effect was recorded for the linalool inhalation group. When examining potential moderators CAM and SWB, results indicated as CAMBI scores increased, anxiety increased. When examining blood oxygen saturation and CAMBI scores, the linalool inhalation group experienced a reduction in anxiety shown by increased blood oxygen levels. When examining SWB scores, as SWB increased, anxiety increased. A possible rationale for these results could involve the population age ( $M=18$ ). This population was possibly indifferent to SWB, most selected “Neither agree nor Disagree.” One third of United States teenagers are religiously unaffiliated and 6% identify as atheists. Future research should examine CAMBI, SWB, and linalool inhalation in heterogenous populations while collecting a larger sample size to assess for a potential statistical significance.