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Resilience in Relation to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Coping Behaviors in Combat-exposed Veterans



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Introduction

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following a traumatic experience. Many veterans who are exposed to combat develop PTSD, yet many also show resilience following trauma exposure.
- Resilience can be defined as adaptive functioning in the face of stress or trauma. PTSD is often associated with less resilience while coping skills often increase resilience outcomes.
- It is less known whether the relationship is different across the different clusters of PTSD symptoms and different types of coping behaviors, which can be adaptive (e.g., social support) or maladaptive (e.g., drug use).

Aims

- 1) To determine whether there was a difference in resilience scores as a function of PTSD status. **Hypothesis 1:** Combat trauma-exposed veterans without PTSD would have greater resilience scores than those with PTSD.
- 2) To determine whether there was a different association with resilience by PTSD symptom cluster total severity score. **Hypothesis 2:** Avoidance cluster would be the strongest predictor of lower resilience in veterans with PTSD.
- 3) To examine which types of coping behaviors were more strongly related to resilience. **Hypothesis 3:** Some coping subscales would be more strongly related to higher resilience than others.

Measures

- A clinical interview (**Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale for DSM-IV; CAPS-IV**) was completed to determine current PTSD status and severity.
- Self-report assessment measures were completed:
- **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)**, total sum score
- **Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE)**, 14 separate subscale scores

Results

Table 1. Descriptive stats (N=226, Combat trauma-exposed veterans) of demographics, predictors, and outcomes

Variable	Mean / (SD)	Range
Age	30.4779 (4.31246)	22-40
Gender		
Male	90.3% (N=204)	
Female	9.7% (N=22)	
Group Assignment		
PTSD +	39.8% (N=72)	
PTSD -	60.2% (N=109)	
Race		
White	70.6% (N= 156)	
Black	19.9% (N=44)	
Other	9.5% (N=221)	
DC-RISC	31.6895 (5.74731)	.00-40.00
CAPS Scores		
Re-experiencing	3.32 (4.060)	0-19
Avoidance	10.20 (11.892)	0-46
Hyperarousal	12.09 (8.828)	0-36
COPE Scores		
Activecop	11.7773 (2.34675)	4.00-16.00
Denial	5.1864 (1.53997)	4.00-12.00
Religious	7.8500 (4.14577)	4.00-16.00
Humor	10.4909 (3.42898)	4.00-16.00
Behdisengage	5.6636 (1.77129)	4.00-12.00
Restraint	9.7455 (2.48258)	4.00-16.00
Emotsocsupport	8.4500 (3.12776)	4.00-16.00
Subsuse	6.2055 (2.80706)	4.00-16.00
Acceptance	12.0000 (2.48649)	4.00-16.00
Suppcompact	9.5955 (2.39958)	4.00-16.00
Planning	12.4500 (2.78651)	4.00-16.00
Posreintgrowth	12.3409 (2.59911)	4.00-16.00
Mentaldiseng	9.1227 (2.3519)	4.00-16.00
Focusventemo	7.8682 (2.57949)	4.00-16.00
Instsocsupport	10.1045 (2.91790)	4.00-16.00

AIM 1

- A t-test was run to determine if there is a difference between trauma-exposed veterans with and without PTSD.
- +PTSD had a significantly lower resilience score (M=30.16, SD=6.96) compared to those -PTSD (M=32.68, SD=4.54), t(174)=2.91, p=.004.

AIM 2, Table 2. Linear regression analysis examining PTSD symptom clusters associated with CD-RISC scores

Predictor	t(df)	β	Std. Error	p
CAPS Cluster Scores				
Re-experiencing	-.426	.672	.151	.237
Avoidance	-2.397	.019	.103	-.014
Hyperarousal	.173	.863	.162	.352

Results Cont.

AIM 3, Table 3. Linear regression analysis examining the association of COPE subscales with CD-RISC scores. (**Bolded: p<.05**).

Predictor	t(df)	β	Std. Error	p
COPE Scores				
Activecop	3.003	.205	.167	.003
Denial	.584	.030	.194	.560
Religious	3.168	.168	.074	.002
Humor	.142	.007	.086	.887
Behdisengage	-2.202	-.122	.180	.005
Restraint	-.011	-.001	.130	.991
Emotsocsupport	.343	.025	.132	.732
Subsuse	-.727	-.037	.105	.468
Acceptance	4.244	.227	.121	.000
Suppcompact	.065	.004	.139	.948
Planning	.982	.078	.164	.327
Posreintgrowth	4.370	.287	.145	.000
Mentaldiseng	-1.518	-.082	.133	.131
Focusventemo	-6.168	-.332	.120	.000
Instsocsupport	-1.195	-.085	.141	.233

Conclusion and Limitations

- Combat exposed veterans with PTSD had lower resilience scores than those without PTSD.
- Avoidance behaviors predicted lower resilience compared to the other symptom clusters, perhaps given the importance of avoidance for impacting daily functioning and maintaining symptoms.
- Coping subscales were variably associated with resilience, suggesting not all coping approaches are beneficial.
- More specifically, Positive reinterpretation and growth, Active coping, Religion, and Acceptance were associated with greater resilience scores whereas Behavioral disengagement, and Focus and venting of emotions were negatively associated with resilience score.
- Limitations include: self-report bias; little variability in resilience measure; limited generalizability given the restricted sample demographics.

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References upon request (abigalecdagher@gmail.com)