



Investigating the Moderating Role of Culture on the Relationship Between Appraisals and Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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SUMMARY

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Appraisals related to control have been found to play a central role in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Recent research has demonstrated that culture affects the way individuals appraise an experience. This study investigated the influence of culture on trauma-related appraisals and PTSD symptoms, with a particular focus on appraisals related to control.

Participants were adult trauma survivors from a European-Australian or Asian-Australian background. Each participant filled out a series of scales and questionnaires that measured PTSD symptoms and trauma-related appraisals, such as self-blame, mastery, perceived control, and mental defeat. It was found that in both European Australians and Asian Australians maladaptive appraisals had moderate to strong relationships with PTSD symptoms. For European Australians, greater mental defeat, self-blame, less perceived present control, and mastery were significant predictors of PTSD symptoms. In contrast, mental defeat was not a significant predictor of PTSD symptoms for Asian Australians.

Both groups moderated the indirect effect of trauma-related appraisals on PTSD symptoms through independent self-construal. Therefore, the extent to which individuals emphasize independent self-construal determines the relationship between these appraisal types and PTSD symptoms. Current models may need to broaden the conceptualization of self, control, and responsibility to capture cultural differences in self-construal.

Based on the current research, current PTSD models may be applicable for trauma survivors from Asian cultural backgrounds; however, there may be cultural differences in the association between certain trauma-related appraisals and posttraumatic stress disorder.

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