How do social support and optimism moderate the relationship between traumatic exposure and PTSD symptoms?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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Barbara E. Wojcierowska
Promise me you’ll always remember: You’re braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

A. A. Milne
Abstract

The aim of this research was to look at how individuals within the Auckland region of New Zealand were affected by traumatic events in their lives. The current study’s aims included looking at the relationship between trauma exposure and PTSD symptoms within individuals that had experienced traumatic events in the Auckland region of New Zealand. The current project also aimed to investigate whether optimism and social support had a moderating effect on the PTSD symptoms of Auckland residents who had experienced trauma. A cross-sectional, self-report survey design was used to collect data. This design was selected due to the time constraints of the project and considerations of how data would be collected. The self-report questionnaire was the only method of data collection for our constructs of PTSD, traumatic events, optimism and social support. Participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire online. One hundred and fifty participants attempted the questionnaire. One hundred and eight participants provided complete data. Statistical analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between trauma exposure, within 12 months and lifetime, and PTSD symptom prevalence within a general Auckland, New Zealand population. In addition, moderation analyses were conducted on the relationship between PTSD symptoms and trauma exposure. Results established a statistically significant relationship between trauma exposure within the last 12 months and PTSD symptoms. No moderation effects were found for social support and optimism in the present study for a general Auckland, New Zealand population. This research contributes to existing general population research regarding trauma exposure and also looks at optimism and social support in general populations.
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Laughter truly is the best medicine. Coffee helps also.

Thank you.
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