

Personality traits and trauma exposure: The relationship between personality traits and PTSD symptoms, stress, and negative affect following exposure to traumatic cues

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Abstract

Exposure to traumatic events can lead to PTSD and various types of emotional distress. Aside from the exposure itself, numerous factors are relevant for the development of emotional distress following a traumatic event. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between the six HEXACO personality traits and PTSD symptoms, stress, and negative affect following traumatic cues that can evoke emotional distress. Two hundred and forty-nine participants (N = 249) completed demographic and personality-trait questionnaires. An hour after filling out those questionnaires, the participants were asked to watch a 3-minute video clip of a series of terror attacks. After watching the video clip, the participants filled out PTSD-symptom, perceived-stress, and negative-affect questionnaires. Structural-equation-model (SEM) analyses showed that PTSD symptoms were positively associated with past trauma, negatively associated with honesty-humility, positively associated with emotionality, and negatively associated with extraversion. Stress was positively associated with emotionality, negatively associated with extraversion, and negatively associated with agreeableness. Negative affect was negatively associated with honesty-humility, positively associated with emotionality, negatively associated with extraversion, and negatively associated with agreeableness. In addition, positive relationships were found between PTSD symptoms and stress, PTSD symptoms and negative affect, and stress and negative affect. This study demonstrates the importance of HEXACO personality traits in coping with numerous aspects of emotional distress following trauma exposure. In addition, it also demonstrates the different positive effects of different personality traits on each type of emotional distress. Clinical and practical implications are discussed.

Key words: trauma exposure, personality traits, PTSD symptoms, stress, negative affect



Biography:

Michael Weinberg is senior lecturer at the School of Social Work, University of Haifa and the head of the trauma social work specialization in the MA program. His research focuses on exploring the coping process with stress and trauma (e.g. terror attacks, traumatic events, war etc.). Within the context of trauma he examined the survivor, the spouse, the general population and traumatic bereavement. Within the context of other aspects of stress he is involved in projects examining the coping of parents of a child with autism and stigma. Michael Weinberg has published over 30 articles in peer reviewed journals and book chapters.

Speaker Publications:

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