

# RESISTING FEAR: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF PROBLEM-SOLVING APPRAISALS IN POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND DEPRESSION

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**Abstract:** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are debilitating mental health disorders that can occur following exposure to traumatic events. The present study aimed to examine the role of problem-solving appraisals in these disorders. A sample of 200 individuals who had experienced a traumatic event completed self-report measures of PTSD and depression symptoms, problem-solving appraisals, and coping strategies. The results indicated that problem-solving appraisals were negatively associated with symptoms of PTSD and depression. Coping strategies did not significantly predict symptoms of PTSD and depression after controlling for problem-solving appraisals. The findings suggest that problem-solving appraisals may play a crucial role in resisting fear and reducing symptoms of PTSD and depression.

**Keywords:** Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, problem-solving appraisals, coping strategies, cognitive processes, mental health, traumatic events, interventions.

## INTRODUCTION

Education Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are two common mental health disorders that can occur following exposure to a traumatic event. These disorders can significantly impair an individual's daily functioning and quality of life. While there are various approaches to treating these disorders, it is essential to understand the cognitive processes involved in the development and maintenance of PTSD and depression. Recent research suggests that problem-solving appraisals, which are evaluations of one's ability to cope with stressors, may play a role in resisting fear and reducing symptoms of PTSD and depression. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are two mental health disorders that can result from exposure to traumatic events. While the symptoms of these disorders can vary, they can significantly impair an individual's daily functioning and quality of life. Various approaches have been developed to treat PTSD and depression, including pharmacological interventions and psychotherapy. However, there is growing interest in examining the cognitive processes involved in the development and maintenance of these disorders. Recent research has suggested that problem-solving appraisals, which are evaluations of one's ability to cope with stressors, may play a role in reducing symptoms of PTSD and depression. Understanding the role of problem-solving appraisals in these

disorders may lead to the development of more effective interventions that can help individuals resist fear and manage their symptoms. The present study aims to examine the role of problem-solving appraisals in PTSD and depression by investigating the association between problem-solving appraisals and symptoms of these disorders in a sample of individuals who have experienced a traumatic event.

## **METHODS**

To examine the role of problem-solving appraisals in PTSD and depression, a cross-sectional study was conducted with a sample of 200 participants who had experienced a traumatic event. Participants completed self-report measures of PTSD and depression symptoms, problem-solving appraisals, and coping strategies. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis, controlling for demographic variables and coping strategies.

### **Participants:**

The study included 200 individuals who had experienced a traumatic event and were recruited from a community sample. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and able to understand and provide informed consent. Exclusion criteria included a history of traumatic brain injury, neurological disorders, or current substance abuse.

### **Measures:**

Participants completed self-report measures of PTSD and depression symptoms, problem-solving appraisals, and coping strategies. PTSD symptoms were assessed using the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5), a 20-item self-report measure that assesses the severity of PTSD symptoms over the past month. Depression symptoms were assessed using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), a 9-item self-report measure that assesses the severity of depressive symptoms over the past two weeks. Problem-solving appraisals were assessed using the Problem Solving Inventory (PSI), a 35-item self-report measure that assesses an individual's perceived ability to solve problems. Coping strategies were assessed using the Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (Brief COPE), a 28-item self-report measure that assesses various coping strategies used by individuals.

### **Procedure:**

Participants were recruited through advertisements posted in the community and online. Interested individuals were screened for eligibility and provided with an informed consent form. Participants who provided consent completed the self-report measures online or in-person, depending on their preference. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and all participants provided written informed consent.

### **Data Analysis:**

The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to investigate the relationship between problem-solving appraisals and symptoms of PTSD and depression, while controlling for demographic variables and coping strategies. The demographic variables included age, gender, education, and income. Coping strategies were included as covariates in the analysis to determine whether the association between problem-solving appraisals and symptoms of PTSD and depression remained significant after controlling for coping strategies. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.0.

## **RESULTS**

The results indicated that problem-solving appraisals were negatively associated with symptoms of PTSD and depression. Specifically, individuals who reported higher levels of problem-solving appraisals had fewer symptoms of PTSD and depression. Coping strategies did not significantly predict symptoms of PTSD and depression after controlling for problem-solving appraisals.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings suggest that problem-solving appraisals may play a crucial role in resisting fear and reducing symptoms of PTSD and depression. Individuals who view themselves as capable of effectively coping with stressors may be less likely to develop symptoms of PTSD and depression. These findings have important implications for the development of interventions for PTSD and depression, as interventions that target problem-solving appraisals may be effective in reducing symptoms of these disorders.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study suggest that problem-solving appraisals may be a protective factor against the development and maintenance of PTSD and depression following exposure to a traumatic event. Future research should continue to examine the role of cognitive processes in the development and maintenance of these disorders, with a focus on the potential for interventions that target problem-solving appraisals to reduce symptoms of PTSD and depression.

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