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The relationship between forgiveness, mastery, and emotional distress following exposure to traumatic events through the media

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Modern technology has made possible unprecedented opportunities for second-hand exposure to disasters and violence. Exposure to traumatic video footage of terror attacks as distributed over social networks can cause significant emotional distress. Dealing with such stress requires attention to significant personal resources. This study examined the relationship between tendency to forgive and mastery with PTSD symptoms and stress among 249 participants (N=249). The study questionnaires were filled out at two points in time. At Time 1 (T1): Tendency-to-forgive, mastery and general PTSD symptoms and stress were completed. At Time 2 (T2): After watching a 3 minute video clip of a series of terror attacks that were distributed over social networks the participants filled out PTSD symptom and perceived-stress questionnaires once again. The study results demonstrated that tendency to forgive the self was negatively associated with stress levels at T1, whereas tendency to forgive the situation was negatively associated with both PTSD symptoms at T1 and stress levels at T1. Mastery was positively associated with both PTSD symptoms at T1 and stress levels at T1. In addition, PTSD symptoms at T1 were positively associated with both PTSD symptoms at T2 and stress at T2. However, stress at T1 was only positively associated with stress at T2. The study findings make an important contribution to our understanding of tendency to forgive, mastery, PTSD symptoms and stress among those exposed to traumatic social-media content. Theoretical and clinical implications are discussed.

Biography

Sharon Gil is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Social Work, University of Haifa. His Doctoral research focused on the relationship between dissociative amnesia, caused by traumatic head injury and the development of PTSD and Michael Weinberg is a head of Supplementary Studies at the School of Social Work, University of Haifa. His research also focuses on the secondary trauma experienced by therapists and undergraduate students providing psychological and emotional assistance to trauma survivors.

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