

TRAUMA TV: MEDIA-INDUCED SECONDARY TRAUMATIZATION IN A SAMPLE OF TURKISH ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Media coverage of mass traumatic events (e.g. natural disasters, terrorist attacks etc.) is today, frequent in both traditional and new-age media. Media exposure however, is left out of the diagnostic criteria of secondary trauma in the DSM V. This study examined secondary traumatization in a sample of Turkish adults, with the aim of showing how traumatic events, witnessed via the media can equally lead to significant post-traumatic stress to those directly witnessed. Turkish participants (N=122) were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire containing their trauma histories, the PTSD Checklist-5 (PCL-5), and the Impact of Events Scale Revised (IES-R) for each of the traumatic events they were directly and indirectly exposed to. Overall, post-traumatic stress levels were higher than the PTSD symptom threshold, as expected with this sample. Participants rated traumatic events they were exposed to through the media as significantly higher in symptom severity than those they were directly exposed to, on all three PTSD subscales (re-experiencing, avoidance, and hyperarousal). The only variable acting as a significant predictor for PCL-5 scores was, perceived intrusions symptom severity in media trauma. Multiple media exposure (more than one separate event), employment status, gender, socio-economic level, or education did not yield any predictive relationship with post-traumatic stress symptom severity.

Conclusion/Discussion: This study contributes to emerging literature, supporting the inclusion of media exposure as a diagnostic criterion for future versions of the DSM by offering further evidence that traumatic events witnessed via the media, induce post-traumatic stress symptoms.

INTRODUCTION

•Exposure to lifelong traumatic events, such as; serious accidents, natural disasters, sexual and non-sexual assault, combat, abuse, bereavement, life-threatening illnesses are known to cause **Post-traumatic stress**. (APA, 2013; Lukaschek et al., 2013). Many studies indicate that the magnitude of the trauma, i.e. the degree of exposure, strongly predict the severity of the above PTS (Bal, 2008; Lukaschek et al., 2013).

•Diagnostic Statistics of Manual of Psychological Disorders V (DSMV, APA, 2013) included new criteria: indirect exposure, by learning that someone the person knows was exposed to trauma (criterion A3). Although indirect (secondary) exposure in PTSD diagnosis improved the practitioner's ability to diagnose and treat post-traumatic stress, there is further evidence for broader Criterion A4, including the exposure from tv and social media. Media induced mass trauma has been studied extensively, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. (Ahern et al., 2004; Deroma et al., 2003; Pfefferbaum et al., 2019; Saylor et al., 2003).

•However, a Turkish sample was never studied so far, despite the multiple mass traumatic events such as military coup attempt, terrorist bombings, massive protests, surging violence instances. This study investigates the impact of mass traumatic events exposed via media and social media outlets.

METHODS

- Turkish speaking adults (N=122) recruited from Social Media Outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter. The sample consisted mainly of educated, internet users who consume social media content and news media.
- Participants without a media trauma history were excluded.
- Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire containing their trauma histories, the PTSD Checklist-5 (PCL-5), and the Impact of Events Scale-Revised (IES-R) for each of the traumatic events they were directly and indirectly exposed.
- A multiple Regression was calculated with PCL-5 total score as the dependent variable.
- Participants were provided with Information Sheet and Consent Form; Study followed BPS Code of Conduct provided by University of Bolton's approval.

RESULTS

Table 4: Correlations Among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 PCL-5 Total Score										
2 Media IESR Intrusion	.411**									
3 Media IESR Avoidance	.301**	.617**								
4 Media IESR Hyper arousal	.349**	.672**	.585**							
5 Media IESR Total Score	.413**	.907**	.834**	.852**						
6 Direct IESR Intrusion	.292**	.544**	.329**	.376**	.494**					
7 Direct IESR Avoidance	.17	.358**	.318**	.245**	.361**	.815**				
8 Direct IESR Hyper arousal	.301**	.527**	.343**	.418**	.505**	.894**	.817**			
9 Direct IESR Total Score	.267**	.503**	.348**	.362**	.478**	.960**	.929**	.947**		
10 Media Trauma Exposure Frequency	.06	-.04	.17	-.03	.03	-.14	-.197*	-.14	-.17	

Note: N=122. *p< .05; **p< .01;

There was a significant positive moderate correlation between PCL-5 total score and Media IESR Intrusion Symptoms, Media IESR Avoidance Symptoms, Media IESR Hyper Arousal Symptoms, Media IESR Total Score, Direct IESR Intrusion Symptoms, Direct IESR Hyper-Arousal Symptoms, Direct IESR Total Score. No significant relationship was found between PCL-5 Total Score and Direct IESR Avoidance Symptoms ($r= 0.171$, $p=0.059$ $n=122$), PCL-5 Total Score and Media Trauma Exposure Frequency ($r= 0.064$, $p=0.487$ $n=122$).

RESULTS

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Direct IESR Hyper Arousal Symptoms	1.18	0.68
Direct IESR Intrusion Symptoms	1.21	0.742
Direct IESR Avoidance Symptoms	1.22	0.655
Media IESR Avoidance Symptoms	1.35	0.395
Media IESR Intrusion Symptoms	1.41	0.521
Media IESR Hyper Arousal Symptoms	1.42	0.498
Media Trauma Exposure Frequency	1.98	1.16
Direct IESR Total Score	26.49	14.419
Media IESR Total Score	30.6	8.959
Age	31.55	11.91
PTSD Checklist Total Score (PCL-5)	32.25	18.913
Valid N (listwise)		

All the variables taken together explained almost 40% of the variability of the PTSD checklist total score ($R^2 = 0.396$) Media IESR Intrusion Symptoms significantly predicted PCL-5 Scores ($p=0.018$, $B=15.08$). Relationship with the other predictors was not significant.

CONCLUSIONS

- Traumatic social media posts, videos, articles, tv shows, news, newspapers articles produced significant post-traumatic symptoms.
- Multiple media exposure (separate events) had no significant effect on symptom severity.
- This study offers further evidence towards the inclusion of media-induced secondary trauma into the future versions of the DSM.

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