

Predictors and Moderators of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: An Investigation of Anxiety Sensitivity and Resilience in Individuals with Chronic Pain

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Abstract

Introduction: Anxiety sensitivity has been proposed as a psychological vulnerability factor for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Studies have also supported the protective role of resilience for overcoming the negative effects of trauma exposure. Given the linkages between anxiety sensitivity, resilience, trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress, this study explored the potential moderating roles of anxiety sensitivity and resilience on the association between trauma history and PTSD symptoms in a sample of individuals with chronic pain. **Materials and Methods:** A total of 100 patients with chronic pain were recruited from a large public hospital. Patients who had pain lasting for more than 3 months and a pain intensity rating of at least 4/10 were included. The study participants were administered measures of PTSD symptoms (PTSD Checklist – Civilian Version), resilience (Brief Resilient Coping Scale) and anxiety sensitivity (Anxiety Sensitivity Index). **Results:** An analysis of outcome measures indicated that anxiety sensitivity and resilience were independently associated with PTSD symptoms, where β s were 0.57 and -0.23, respectively. The relationship between trauma and PTSD symptom severity was also moderated by anxiety sensitivity. Trauma history was associated with higher PTSD symptom severity only in those with high anxiety sensitivity. However, contrary to the hypotheses, resilience did not serve as a moderator. **Conclusion:** There are potential benefits of PTSD interventions that increase resilience and decrease anxiety sensitivity in individuals with chronic pain, especially for those who have experienced a traumatic event. Given that the presence of PTSD symptomatology in chronic pain populations negatively impact patient well-being, it would be important for clinicians to assess, monitor and treat PTSD in individuals with chronic pain.

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