

## Effects of Emotional Expression and Religion on Trauma Adaptation and Well-Being

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**Background:** Previous research has found that repeated expression of a traumatic experience is beneficial to physical health. However, mechanisms through which written emotional expression affects health remain unclear. Religion is another factor that has been found to facilitate adaptation to psychological trauma. Although very little research has been conducted on the relationship between emotional expression and religion, these constructs may be closely associated conceptually. **Purpose:** We evaluated the correlation among language use, religion, and well-being indicators in a Taiwanese student sample. These indicators included depressive, anxiety, physical, and PTSD symptoms. Other psychosocial variables included trait optimism, trait emotional intelligence, and emotional regulation.

**Method:** Participants were 158 undergraduate students from National Central University (81 females, 77 males). Participants were assigned randomly to write about a trivial topic (CC), a traumatic experience (TC), or a traumatic experience from a religious/spiritual perspective (TRC). Baseline well-being indicators were administered before participants wrote for 3 sessions, 20 minutes a session. Well-being indicators were administered again at 1-month follow-up. **Result:** Results indicated a significant interaction between experimental condition and frequency of talking about their traumatic experience in predicting PTSD symptoms. Writing about a traumatic experience from a religious/spiritual perspective was associated with reduced PTSD symptoms for those who rarely talked about their traumatic experience prior to writing, but not for those in the trauma (without religion) writing condition. **Conclusion:** Using religious words in writing about a traumatic experience could further help participants, who rarely talked about the experience prior the experiment, by reducing their PTSD symptoms.