Salutogenesis and culture: Personal and community sense of coherence among adolescents belonging to three different cultural groups


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Aims

- Compare personal and community sense of coherence (SOC) as well as stress reactions in a variety of cultures: Jews, Muslims and Druze on the background of a bush fire.

- Investigate whether and how personal and community SOC function as salutary factors according to cultural rules in explaining stress reactions.
The stressful situation was a huge bush fire which broke out on Mount Carmel at the beginning of Dec. 2010.

The fire killed 44 people, destroyed 2500 Ha of forest and caused the destruction of many houses in the Carmel district.

Many neighborhoods and some communities were displaced from their homes as a result of the fire which lasted for approximately a week.
Cultural diversity in Israel

- Israel is a culturally diverse society which includes several minority groups aside from the Jewish majority which accounts for 75% of the entire state population.
- Of the minority groups, 84% are Muslims and 8% are Druze (Statistical Bureau, 2010).
- The division between Jewish citizens and the minority groups is reflected in religion, culture, national identity, and socioeconomic status.
The salutogenic model

Salutogenesis
An assets approach

Gratitude
(McGillough)

Self-efficacy
(Bandura)

Hardiness
(Kobasa)

Empathy
(Eisenberg)

Humour
(Martin)

Coping
(Lazarus)

Locus of control
(Rotter)

Wellbeing
(Diener)

Ecological system theory
(Bronfenbrenner)

Attachment
(Bowlby)

Learned resourcefulness
(Rosenbaum)

Learned optimism
(Seligman)

Learned hopefulness
(Zimmerman)

Quality of Life
(Lindström)

Connectedness
(Blum)

Cultural capital
(Bourdieu)

Social capital
(Putnam)

Empowerment
(Freire)

Resilience
(Werner)

Will to meaning
(Frankl)

Flourishing
(Keyes)

Ecological system theory
(Bronfenbrenner)

Action competence
(Bruun Jensen)

Interdisciplinarity
(Klein)

Attachment
(Bowlby)
Sense of coherence (SOC)

- SOC is a global orientation, an enduring tendency to see the world as more or less comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful.

- Given their tendency to perceive the world as meaningful and manageable, individuals with a strong SOC will perceive themselves as having both internal and external resources to deal with different situations (Antonovsky, 1987) and will be less likely to react with symptoms such as anxiety or anger during stressful events (Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2011).
Antonovsky (1987) considered some cultural dimensions which contribute to development of a strong sense of coherence.

A few studies have explored SOC among majority and minority groups around the world and their results are inconsistent. While some minority groups have a strong sense of coherence similar to majority groups (Ying & Akutzu, 1998), other minority groups have a weaker SOC compared to their majority counterparts (Braun-Lewensohn & Sagy, 2011; Glantz et al., 2005).
Sense of community coherence

- The perception of the community with regard to the three components of Antonovsky's concept.
- **Community comprehensibility** - life in the community is predictable, safe and secure for the adolescents.
- **Community manageability** resources are those which can assist adolescents in times of crisis and distress.
- **Community meaningfulness** resources enable adolescents to express and to realize themselves, to feel satisfaction, challenge and interest.
When considering the literature on the psychological and behavioral effects of disasters on adolescents, a wide spectrum of outcomes is found.

It should be noted, that although some of the population suffers from such psychological difficulties, a majority of children and adolescents show resilience, cope well and do not suffer major emotional problems as result of stressful events.

However, adolescents from minority groups seem to be more vulnerable to distress following disasters.
Research questions

1. Are there differences between the cultural groups in the two coping resources of personal and community SOC, as well as in the different stress reactions?

2. What are the relationships between personal SOC, community SOC and the different stress reactions in the entire sample?

3. Do personal and community SOC explain stress reactions of anxiety, anger and psychological distress in the same way in the three cultures?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jews N=779</th>
<th>Muslims N=330</th>
<th>Druze N=500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>53.5% girls</td>
<td>58.3% girls</td>
<td>59.7% girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M=16.04</td>
<td>M=15.56</td>
<td>M=25.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD=.99</td>
<td>SD=1.21</td>
<td>SD=1.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father’s job status</td>
<td>80% work</td>
<td>80% work</td>
<td>80% work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s job status</td>
<td>80% work</td>
<td>30% work</td>
<td>40% work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s education-</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<td>Professional or</td>
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<td>academic education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother’s education-</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional or</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic education</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Measures**

- **Demographic Background** Data was collected relating to gender, age, and parents’ level of education and parents' job status as indicators for socio-economic status.

- **Sense of Coherence (SOC)** (Antonovsky, 1987) was measured using a series of semantic differential items on a seven-point Likert-type scale, with anchoring phrases at each end. High scores indicated a strong SOC.
Sense of Community Coherence

- This is a 15 items scale on seven point Likert-type scale with anchoring phrases at each end which was designed for this study.
- It translates the major themes of Antonovsky's personal SOC- comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness into community's resources.
- Examples for items are: To what extent do you feel that you have influence in your community; this community offers interesting alternatives for youth in extra-curricular activities; I intend to live in this community in the future.
Outcome scales

- **State Anxiety** (Spielberger et al., 1970). This scale consists of eleven items on a four point Likert scale (1- almost never 4-almost always).

- **State Anger** (Spielberger, et al., 1970). This scale consists of six items on a four point Likert scale (1- almost never 4-almost always).

- **Psychological Distress** (Ben-Sira, 1979) is a six-item psychosomatic symptom scale on a four point Likert scale (1- never 4- very frequently), referring to frequency of occurrence of familiar psychological symptoms.
# Means and SD among the groups on the study's variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Jews (a)</th>
<th>Muslims (b)</th>
<th>Druze (c)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N≈779</td>
<td>N≈330</td>
<td>N≈500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC (1-7)</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMSOC (1-7)</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Anxiety (1-4)</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Anger (1-4)</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress (1-4)</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.67</td>
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</table>
Differences among the groups on the study's variables

SOC (1-7)  COMSOC (1-7)  Anxiety (1-4)  Anger (1-4)  SPD (1-4)

- Jews
- Muslims
- Druze
## Correlation matrix of study's variables

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>1. Personal SOC</td>
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<td>-.27***</td>
<td>-.32***</td>
<td>-.40***</td>
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<td>2. Community SOC</td>
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<td>-.11***</td>
<td>-.18***</td>
<td>-.16***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. State Anxiety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.58***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. State Anger</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Psychological Distress</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
### State Anxiety

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of coherence (SOC)</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-11.00***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of community coherence (COMSOC)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC X cultural group</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMSOC X cultural group</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.06</td>
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### State Anger

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variables</th>
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<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of coherence (SOC)</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>-13.37***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of community coherence (COMSOC)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-3.71***</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC X cultural group</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMSOC X cultural group</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.17</td>
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### Psychological Distress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of coherence (SOC)</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>-17.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community coherence (COMSOC)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-2.19*</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC X cultural group</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>2.19*</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMSOC X cultural group</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-1.34</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Hierarchal regression for SPD in three cultural groups

- **Jews**
- **Muslims**
- **Druze**

- **COMSOC**
- **SOC**
Conclusion

- **Personal SOC** was strongest among the majority group (Jews) followed by the Druze and lastly by the Muslims.

- The gap between the Druze and Muslim groups is puzzling since the Druze are not just a minority group but also a 'minority within the minority'.
Community SOC

- The second salutary factor of community SOC was the strongest among Druze, even stronger than among the Jews and the weakest among the Muslims.

- It seems that the very small and closed community of Druze, which is based on social and traditional membership in the ethnic group, can explain the results.
State anger and SPD were lowest among Jews followed by Druze, while the highest levels were found among Muslims. Anxiety was also the highest among Muslims.

These results confirm other research in which minority groups tend to be more vulnerable to symptoms of distress when facing stressful situations of disasters.
Sense of coherence was expected to be a strong protective factor.

Personal SOC was found to have the weakest power to explain stress reactions among the Muslim adolescents.

It appears that SOC can be a better protective factor among strong populations.
Druze adolescents not only had the strongest community SOC but this was also especially significant in explaining stress for this group.

Being a small community with strong feelings of coherence protects its members from symptoms of distress more than in the two other groups.
In sum, our conclusion regarding salutogenesis and culture is equivocal and much more complicated than Antonovisky's conviction.

Our results indeed support the notion that SOC is a significant protective factor in all cultures when facing a stressful situation. However levels of SOC are quite different for various cultural groups and explain stress reactions differently.

Thus, Antonovisky's notion that sense of coherence is a cross-cultural concept and contributes to resilience in all cultures and at all situations still has to be clarified in future research.
THANK YOU