

University of Nevada, Reno

College Students' Psychological Well-Being & Resource Use in Response to the Las Vegas Shooting

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and the Honors Program

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to examine the psychological impact that the October 1, 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas had on students attending the University of Nevada, Reno. Levels of psychological distress before and after the shooting were collected using the *Impact of Events Scale-Revised* (Weiss, 2007). Awareness and use of on-campus resources after the shooting, and perceptions about the most beneficial services were collected as well by use of a survey. Participants who had a relationship to the festival at which the shooting occurred and/or Las Vegas experienced more psychological distress on average in comparison to those who had no connection to the festival and Las Vegas. Many respondents were aware of all resources offered, yet utilization rates were low. The most utilized resources by participants were those that unified the community, such as the candlelight vigil. Continued research on responses and supports provided by universities and colleges across the United States after a traumatic event impacted their community can assist in the development of a plan for administrators, faculty, and staff to utilize to ensure their students' needs are appropriately and adequately being met.

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Appendix A

Survey

On October 1st, 2017, a lone gunman, opened fire on the Las Vegas strip at a 3-day country music festival. About 22,000 people of all ages from around the world, including Reno, NV, attended this festival. On the final evening of the event at approximately 10:08 p.m., the gunman began firing into the crowd from his hotel room. He fired for 10 to 15 minutes uninterrupted before pulling the trigger on himself, leaving at least 58 people dead and over 500 injured (Yan & Park, 2017).

1. Proximity to Event

1. Are you over the age of 18?
 - Yes → continue to question 2
 - No → end survey
2. Were you in attendance at the Route 91 Harvest Festival, any of the three days?
 - Yes → continue to question 3
 - No → skip to question 6
3. Were you in attendance at the Route 91 Harvest Festival the day of the shooting?
 - Yes → continue to question 4
 - No → skip to question 6
4. Were you in attendance at the Route 91 Harvest Festival at the time when the shooting occurred?
 - Yes → continue to question 5
 - No → skip to question 6
5. Were you physically injured as a result of the shooting?
 - Yes → continue to question 6
 - No → continue to question 6
6. Were any of your family members, close friends, or other people with whom you have a close relationship to in attendance at the Route 91 Harvest Festival during the shooting?
 - Yes → continue to question 7
 - No → skip to question 8
7. Were any of these people physically injured as a result of the shooting?
 - Yes → continue to question 8
 - No → continue to question 8
8. To your knowledge, were any acquaintances of yours or individuals you know of/are associated with in some way (e.g., friend-of-a-friend, co-worker, classmate) in attendance at the Route 91 Harvest Festival during the shooting?
 - Yes → continue to question 9
 - No → skip to question 10
9. To your knowledge, were any of these people physically injured as a result of the shooting?

- Yes → continue to question 10
 - No → continue to question 10
10. Have you ever lived in Las Vegas, Nevada or the surrounding area (e.g., Clark County)?
- Yes → continue to question 11
 - No → continue to question 11
11. Do you have family currently living in Las Vegas, Nevada or the surrounding area (e.g., Clark County)?
- Yes → continue to question 12
 - No → continue to question 12
12. Do you have friends currently living in Las Vegas, Nevada or the surrounding area (e.g., Clark County)?
- Yes → continue to question 13
 - No → continue to question 13
13. Have you ever traveled to and/or visited Las Vegas, Nevada or the surrounding area (e.g., Clark County)?
- Yes → continue to question 14
 - No → continue to question 14
14. Do you have any other connection or association with Las Vegas, Nevada or the surrounding area (e.g., Clark County)?
- Yes → continue to question 15
 - No → continue to question 16
15. If yes, please specify below.
- Text box for response → continue to question 16
16. Do you enjoy country music?
- Yes
 - No

2. Impact of Events Scale

Below is a list of difficulties people sometimes have after stressful life events. Please read each item, and then indicate to the best of your recollection, how distressing each difficulty was for you **DURING THE WEEK IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING** the Las Vegas Shooting. How much were you distressed or bothered by these difficulties? (0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=Moderately, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Extremely)

*** A Likert scale will appear for each question once put into the survey program.

- 17. Any reminder brought back feelings about it
- 18. I had trouble staying asleep
- 19. Other things kept making me think about it
- 20. I felt irritable and angry
- 21. I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it

22. I thought about it when I didn't mean to
23. I felt as if it hadn't happened or wasn't real
24. I stayed away from reminder of it
25. Pictures about it popped into my mind
26. I was jumpy and easily startled
27. I tried not to think about it
28. I was aware that I still had a lot of feelings about it, but I didn't deal with them
29. My feelings about it were kind of numb
30. I found myself acting or feeling like I was back at that time
31. I had trouble falling asleep
32. I had waves of strong feelings about it
33. I tried to remove it from my memory
34. I had trouble concentrating
35. Reminders of it caused me to have physical reactions, such as sweating, trouble breathing, nausea, or a pounding heart
36. I had dreams about it
37. I felt watchful and on-guard
38. I tried not to talk about it

Sometimes people continue to have difficulties long after a stressful life event. Please read each item, and indicate how distressing each difficulty has been for you **DURING THE PAST SEVEN DAYS** with respect to the Las Vegas Shooting that occurred on October 1st, 2017. How much have you been distressed or bothered by these difficulties? (0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=Moderately, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Extremely)

39. Any reminder brought back feelings about it
40. I had trouble staying asleep
41. Other things kept making me think about it
42. I felt irritable and angry
43. I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it
44. I thought about it when I didn't mean to
45. I felt as if it hadn't happened or wasn't real
46. I stayed away from reminder of it
47. Pictures about it popped into my mind
48. I was jumpy and easily startled
49. I tried not to think about it
50. I was aware that I still had a lot of feelings about it, but I didn't deal with them
51. My feelings about it were kind of numb
52. I found myself acting or feeling like I was back at that time
53. I had trouble falling asleep
54. I had waves of strong feelings about it
55. I tried to remove it from my memory

- 56. I had trouble concentrating
- 57. Reminders of it caused me to have physical reactions, such as sweating, trouble breathing, nausea, or a pounding heart
- 58. I had dreams about it
- 59. I felt watchful and on-guard
- 60. I tried not to talk about it

3. Awareness, participation, and usefulness of campus resources

The following questions refer to events, activities, and resources that occurred on the UNR campus in response to the Las Vegas shooting.

61. Which, if any, of the following UNR events, activities, or resources that occurred in response to the Las Vegas shooting were you aware of? (Check all that apply)
- a) Counseling drop-in sessions
 - b) Counseling support groups
 - c) Take 5- Paws for Love (therapy dogs in the Knowledge Center)
 - d) Extended walk-in hours in the counseling center on campus
 - e) Grief Support Consultations
 - f) Candlelight vigil, sponsored by ASUN
 - g) Blood Drives
 - h) Fundraisers for victims (e.g., bake sales)
 - i) I did not hear about any of these.
 - j) Other (Please specify below)
 - _____
62. Did you attend any of the events, participate in any of the activities, or utilize any of the supports IN THE TWO WEEKS FOLLOWING the Las Vegas shooting? (Check all that apply)
- a) Counseling drop-in support groups
 - If checked, please rate how helpful you found utilization of this resource to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
 - b) Take 5- Paws for Love (therapy dogs in the Knowledge Center)
 - If checked, please rate how helpful you found utilization of this resource to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
 - c) Extended walk-in hours in the counseling center on campus
 - If checked, please rate how helpful you found utilization of this resource to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
 - d) Grief Support Consultations

- If checked, please rate how helpful you found utilization of this resource to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
- e) Candlelight vigil
 - If checked, please rate how helpful you found participation in this event to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
- f) Blood Drives
 - If checked, please rate how helpful you found participation in this activity to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
- g) Fundraisers for victims
 - If checked, please rate how helpful you found participation in this activity to your own psychological well-being. (0=Not helpful at all, 1=Somewhat helpful, 2=Very helpful, 3=Extremely Helpful)
- h) I did not attend/utilize any of these.
- i) Other (Please specify below)
 - _____

63. Please indicate whether you continue to utilize any of the following services or participate in any of the following activities.

- Counseling services
- Donating blood specifically to help Clark County
- Volunteering to help victims of the shooting and their loved ones.
- Fundraising to help victims of the shooting and their loved ones
- None of the above
- Other (Please specify below)

• _____

64. Given your own level of distress (or lack thereof) in the weeks immediately following the Las Vegas shooting, which of the events, activities, or resources offered on the UNR campus did you find the most helpful in regards to regaining a sense of normalcy and/or improving psychological well-being?

- Open text box

65. Given your own level of distress (or lack thereof) in the weeks immediately following the Las Vegas shooting, from whom did you get the most support (e.g., friends, family, university clubs, counseling services...)?

- Open text box

66. Were any of your classes cancelled in response to the Las Vegas shooting?

- Yes
- No

67. Did any of your professors discuss the event before/during/after class?
- Yes
 - No
68. Did any of your professors discuss the resources being offered after the shooting?
- Yes
 - No
69. Given your own level of distress (or lack thereof) and the level of distress you may have observed among other students in the weeks immediately following the Las Vegas shooting, do you think the responses by the UNR administration, faculty, staff, and campus organizations adequately and appropriately addressed the needs of the UNR student body? Explain.
70. One of the main reasons for conducting this survey is to provide insight to university administrators, faculty, and staff, as to how to best meet the needs of students after a tragic event. If there is anything else you would like to add (e.g., general comments, suggestions, things you feel are important to share), please do so here.
- Open text box.

4. Demographics

71. What is your current class standing?
- Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Post-Bac/Graduate
72. Which college or school is your major area of study within? (Select all that apply)
- College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources
 - College of Business
 - College of Education
 - College of Engineering
 - College of Liberal Arts
 - College of Science
 - Division of Health Sciences
 - The Reynolds School of Journalism
 - Graduate School
73. What is your age group?
- Under 18
 - 18-20
 - 20-22
 - 23-25
 - 26-28

- 28-30
 - Above 30
74. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
 - East Asian or Asian American
 - Latino or Hispanic American
 - Middle Eastern or Arab American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - South Asian or Indian American
 - White or Caucasian
 - Other, please specify
75. What is your gender identity?
- Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/transgender/other
 - I prefer not to respond.
76. Which of the following describes your current living situation?
- Residence hall
 - Fraternity/Sorority housing
 - At home
 - Off-campus

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. You may enter to win a Starbucks gift card here. If you have any questions/concerns about this study, please feel free to email dominiquebarizone@gmail.com or ldeflorio@unr.edu.

Appendix B

IMPACT OF EVENTS SCALE-Revised (IES-R)

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of difficulties people sometimes have after stressful life events. Please read each item, and then indicate how distressing each difficulty has been for you DURING THE PAST SEVEN DAYS with respect to _____ (event) that occurred on _____ (date). How much have you been distressed or bothered by these difficulties?

	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1. Any reminder brought back feelings about it	0	1	2	3	4
2. I had trouble staying asleep	0	1	2	3	4
3. Other things kept making me think about it.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I felt irritable and angry	0	1	2	3	4
5. I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it	0	1	2	3	4
6. I thought about it when I didn't mean to	0	1	2	3	4
7. I felt as if it hadn't happened or wasn't real.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I stayed away from reminders of it.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Pictures about it popped into my mind.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I was jumpy and easily startled.	0	1	2	3	4
11. I tried not to think about it.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I was aware that I still had a lot of feelings about it, but I didn't deal with them.	0	1	2	3	4
13. My feelings about it were kind of numb.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I found myself acting or feeling like I was back at that time.	0	1	2	3	4
15. I had trouble falling asleep.	0	1	2	3	4
16. I had waves of strong feelings about it.	0	1	2	3	4
17. I tried to remove it from my memory.	0	1	2	3	4
18. I had trouble concentrating.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Reminders of it caused me to have physical reactions, such as sweating, trouble breathing, nausea, or a pounding heart.	0	1	2	3	4
20. I had dreams about it.	0	1	2	3	4
21. I felt watchful and on-guard.	0	1	2	3	4
22. I tried not to talk about it.	0	1	2	3	4

Total IES-R Score: _____

INT: 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 14, 16, 20
 AVD: 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22
 HYP: 4, 10, 15, 18, 19, 21

Weiss, D.S. (2007). The Impact of Event Scale-Revised. In J.P. Wilson, & T.M. Keane (Eds.) *Assessing psychological trauma and PTSD: a practitioner's handbook* (2nd ed., pp. 168-189). New York: Guilford Press.