

**Received Date:** September 14, 2024    **Accepted Date:** October 12, 2024    **Published Date:** November 13, 2024

**Available Online at** <https://www.ijsrisjournal.com/index.php/ojsfiles/article/view/221>

## **Efficacy of Individual Supportive Counseling on Stress Caused by War: A Review**

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## ABSTRACT

The stress caused by war has profound and lasting effects on individuals, often resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. Individual supportive counseling is a commonly used intervention for addressing war-related stress, focusing on providing emotional support, promoting coping skills, and enhancing resilience. This review explores recent studies on the efficacy of individual supportive counseling in alleviating stress caused by war, examining its impact on psychological outcomes and quality of life in war-affected populations.

**Keywords:** Individual Supportive Counseling , Stress Caused by War, PTSD.

## Introduction

War and armed conflict expose individuals to severe stressors, including loss, displacement, violence, and constant fear for personal safety. Exposure to such trauma can lead to mental health conditions, notably PTSD, depression, and anxiety (1,2). While various therapeutic interventions exist, individual supportive counseling is frequently employed due to its accessibility and personalized nature. This form of counseling provides a non-judgmental, supportive environment where individuals can express emotions, process traumatic experiences, and develop coping strategies.

### I. War-Related Stress and Mental Health

The mental health impact of war-related stress is well-documented, with studies showing that affected populations experience higher rates of mental health disorders than the general population (3). The experience of war often disrupts daily life, leading to chronic stress, grief, and feelings of helplessness. Populations exposed to war also have limited access to mental health services, which further compounds their mental health burden (3,4).

## II. Efficacy of Individual Supportive Counseling

### 1. Reduction in PTSD Symptoms

Individual supportive counseling has shown promise in alleviating symptoms of PTSD among war-affected individuals. A study by Bolton et al. (2007) (5) on war survivors in Northern Uganda found that supportive counseling significantly reduced PTSD symptoms in comparison to those who did not receive any treatment. The study emphasized that supportive counseling helped individuals by providing emotional validation and aiding in

reframing traumatic experiences, which are critical steps in PTSD recovery.

### 2. Improvement in Anxiety and Depression

In a study of Syrian refugees, individual supportive counseling was found to reduce anxiety and depression symptoms effectively (6)(7). Participants reported a decrease in intrusive thoughts, improved mood, and better stress management skills. The counseling sessions were adapted to be culturally relevant, which increased engagement and efficacy. These findings suggest that supportive counseling is beneficial in managing war-related anxiety and depression.

### 3. Enhanced Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

Individual supportive counseling also appears to help individuals develop coping mechanisms and increase resilience, particularly in high-stress environments. For instance, a study found that supportive counseling improved coping skills in Bosnian war survivors. The counselors helped individuals identify and utilize personal strengths, promoting resilience and enabling them to handle stress more effectively (6).

### 4. Better Social and Occupational Functioning

The benefits of supportive counseling extend to social and occupational functioning, as observed in a study on Iraqi war veterans. Veterans receiving supportive counseling reported improved relationships and a greater ability to return to work or community roles. This improvement was attributed to the counseling's focus on helping individuals rebuild self-confidence and engage in social activities, which mitigated feelings of isolation commonly experienced by war survivors (8,9).

## III. Challenges and Limitations

While individual supportive counseling has proven effective in many cases, challenges remain. Limited access to mental health professionals, especially in war zones and refugee camps, can hinder the provision of these services. Additionally, cultural differences may affect the acceptance and effectiveness of counseling approaches. A study highlighted that cultural stigma associated with mental health care often limits participation among war-affected populations, suggesting that counseling approaches need to be tailored to cultural norms (10).

#### IV. Recent Advances in Supportive Counseling for War-Affected Populations

The integration of digital counseling platforms has expanded access to supportive counseling for war-affected populations. For example, internet-based counseling has been employed with Syrian refugees in camps, demonstrating similar benefits to face-to-face counseling(11) .Digital platforms enable remote access to counseling services, which is particularly useful in conflict zones where physical mental health services may be unavailable.

#### Conclusion

Individual supportive counseling is an effective intervention for managing stress and mental health symptoms in individuals affected by war. Research indicates that it alleviates PTSD, anxiety, and depression symptoms, enhances resilience, and improves social and occupational functioning. However, there are barriers to access, especially in conflict zones, and cultural sensitivities must be considered to ensure efficacy. As the prevalence of conflict continues, expanding access to supportive counseling, including through digital platforms, could play a crucial role in addressing the mental health needs of war-affected populations.

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