

Confidence in Iron Dome, coupled with resilience, can reduce PTSD symptoms

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Bar-Ilan University researchers have found that belief in the success of the Iron Dome air defense system, coupled with a strong sense of resilience (an inner trait that results in positive adaptation to trauma), can reduce Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms (i.e., can mitigate the effect of exposure to trauma on the development of PTSD symptoms).

Their study, recently published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, examined PTSD [symptoms](#) in Israeli civilians following Operation Protective Edge, the Israel-Gaza conflict in 2014.

Questionnaires were administered to more than 1,250 adult men and women who were within missile range in Israel during the conflict. The study was conducted from December 2014 to January 2015.

Exposure to missile attacks was assessed through "yes/no" questions regarding the threat of death or physical injury either to oneself or to others (e.g., "were you injured by missile attacks?", "was someone close to you injured by missile attacks?").

Confidence in the Iron Dome defense system was measured in two ways. First as a subjective belief indexed by three items rated by a 5-point Likert scale ranking from 1 ("not true at all") to 5 ("very true"): ("I am confident in the Iron Dome system", "The Iron Dome system reduces casualties", and "The Iron Dome system constitutes good protection from missiles"). Second, respondents were asked for subjective estimates of the Iron Dome's success probability (0-100).

The results showed that when resilience was coupled with a high subjective belief in Iron Dome, the detrimental impact of [trauma](#) exposure was mitigated. In other words, even at high exposure levels, trauma symptoms did not increase for resilient subjects who also had confidence in Iron Dome.

"We know that [psychological resilience](#) typically reduces the detrimental effects of trauma exposure on PTSD symptoms. But what we found here is that resilience can be strengthened when coupled with a second factor, namely one's belief in the external protection provided by Iron Dome," said Dr. Yaakov Hoffman, of Bar-Ilan University's Interdisciplinary Department of Social Sciences, the lead author of the study. "Another interesting point is that the Iron Dome system not only saved lives but was also associated with reduced PTSD symptoms, possibly by enhancing one's sense of safety."

Provided by Bar-Ilan University

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