The Importance of Self-Appraisals of Coping Capability in Predicting Engagement in a Web Intervention for Trauma

Charles C. Benight, Kotaro Shoji, Carrie Yeager, Austin Mullings, Svati Dhamija, Terry Boult

Abstract

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy appraisals are a critical component of self-regulation and are highly predictive of behavioral outcomes (Bandura, 1997). The purpose of this study was to test the predictive power of coping self-efficacy appraisals (CSE) in understanding engagement with a web intervention for traumatic stress (My Trauma Recovery). The Triggers and Relaxation modules were utilized to test study hypotheses. Participants (N = 34) were trauma survivors who were part of a larger study. Self-reported engagement at 3 time points during the 15-minute session were measured and CSE at baseline as an independent variable. Repeated measures ANOVA indicated CSE was a significant predictor of engagement with the triggers module (F (1,23) = 5.24, p = .03), but not for th relaxation module (F (1,17) = .11, p = .75). Thus, higher perceived coping capability predicted greater engagement with a module designed to help build skills to manage posttraumatic intrusions.

Introduction

Social cognitive theory proposes that self-efficacy self-appraisals are a critical component of self-regulation and are highly predictive of behavioural outcomes (Bandura, 1997). The process of adaptation to traumatic stress requires extensive self-regulation and coping self-efficacy (CSE) is a powerful predictor of posttraumatic recovery (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Web interventions for traumatic stress have received increased attention with some positive outcomes as well as concerns about engagement (Benight, Ruzek, & Waldrep, 2008). The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that CSE level would predict engagement with a web intervention for traumatic stress (My Trauma Recovery).

Method

The Triggers and Relaxation modules were utilized to test experimental hypotheses. Participants (N = 34) were trauma survivors who came into our human/computer interaction lab as part of a larger study investigating machine learning in this type of intervention. Self-reported engagement at 3 time points during the 15-minute session were measured and CSE at baseline as an independent variable. Mean age was 33.91 (SD = 15.54) for this mostly female (97.1%) sample. Most participants reported at least some college (61%).

Results

Repeated measures ANOVA indicated support for the hypothesis that CSE would be a significant predictor of engagement with a web intervention for trauma for the Triggers module (F (1,23) = 5.24, p = .03), but not for the Relaxation module (F (1,17) = .11, p = .75) (see Figure 1). Thus, greater trauma related CSE at baseline was related to increased engagement for the Triggers module, but not for the Relaxation module.
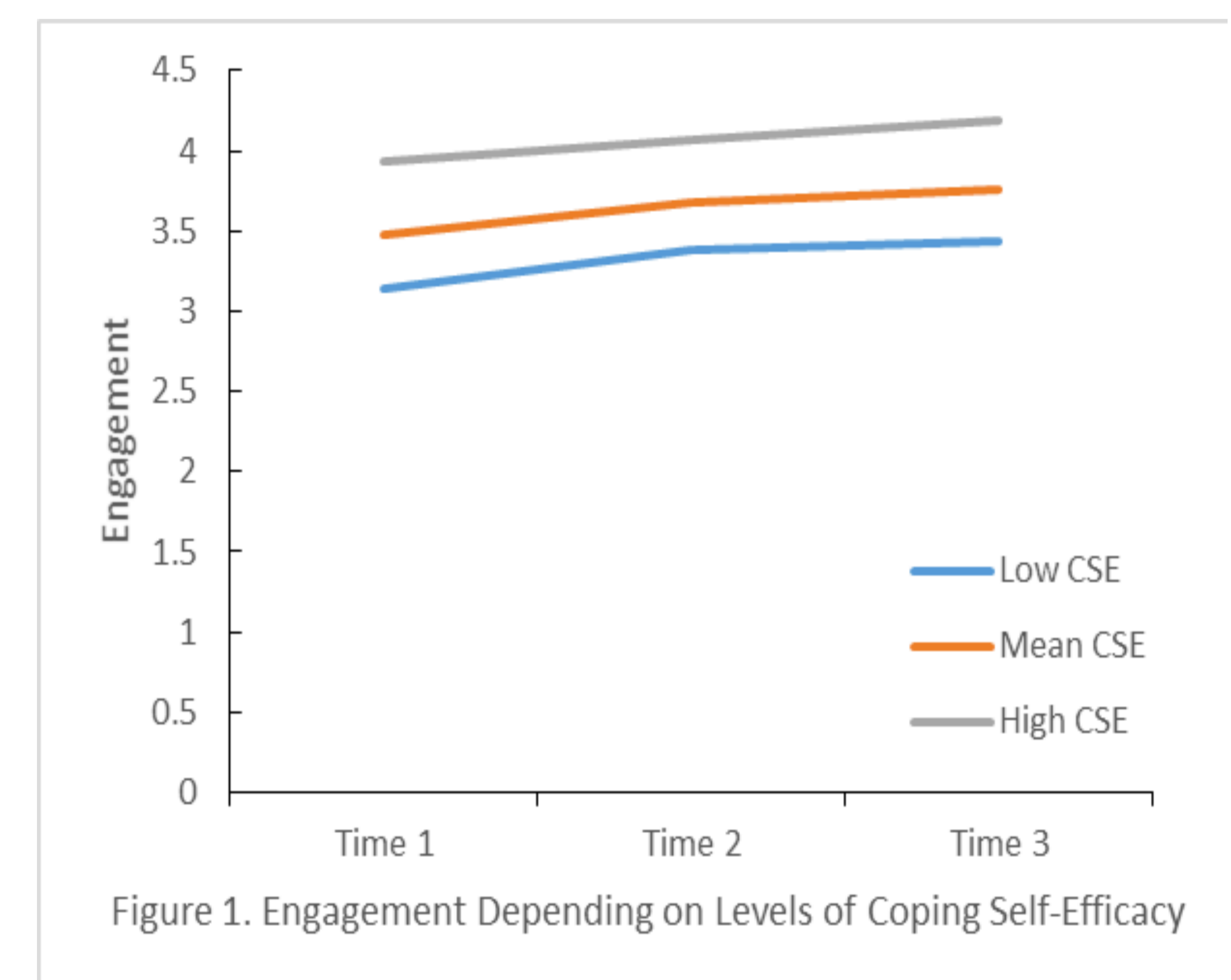

Figure 1. Engagement Depending on Levels of Coping Self-Efficacy

Discussion

Social cognitive theory provides a framework for understanding trauma survivor engagment with technology based interventions. The present findings support the utility of coping self-efficacy for trauma as a predictor of engagement with specific challenges related to trauma memories. Significant literature supports the importance of CSE beliefs in predicting posttraumatic outcomes (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Luszczynska, Benight, & Cieslak, 2009). The present findings suggest those with lower CSE may avoid critical aspects of a web-intervention system and may need additional support (coach or therapist) to make inroads in such an intervention. Future studies are needed to confirm this hypothesis.

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