

Introduction

Year to year the number of mass shootings continues to increase. In turn, the fear and anxiety also increase and have started to affect behavior. Brenan (2019) reported 48% of adults are worried of falling victim to a mass shooting and 10% of people admit to buying a weapon or avoiding large crowds out of worry of becoming a victim. This mass shooting anxiety (MSA) and mass shooting impairment (MSI) appear to be on an upward trend as mass shooting-related worry has gone up 9% over the last two years (Brenan, 2019). This anxiety and behavioral impairment over mass shootings has been found to be more pronounced within certain demographic groups. Past research has shown that non-White, Democratic, younger age, and females tend to exhibit more MSA and MSI than other demographics (Bardeen, Kumpula, & Orcutt, 2013; Brenan, 2019; Darchume, 2019; Jones & Saad, 2019). We hypothesize that we will also find these demographic trends in MSA and MSI.

References

A list of references is available as a separate PDF.



Method

Participants and Procedures

Online survey data from 381 Amazon MTurk workers who were granted \$0.50 financial compensation were used in this study. The majority of participants were White (49.3%), male (52.8%), Independents (36.7%), between the ages of 25 to 34 (47.2%). The demographic, MSA, and MSI data was subjected to correlation and multiple regression analyses to clarify predictive relationships between the variables.

Measures

Basic Information. Participants were asked to report their race, gender, political affiliation, and age.

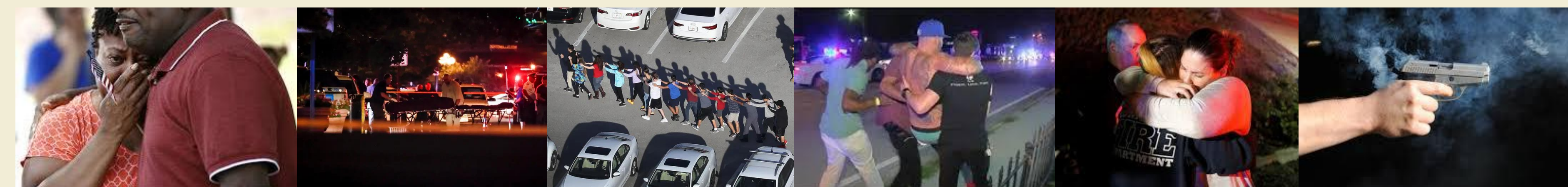
MSA. This was measured using one item: “Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you experienced significant anxiety, fear, or worry about mass shootings?” Responses were rated on a 0 (“never”) to 4 (“nearly every day over the last 2 weeks”) Likert scale ($\bar{x} = 2.02$; $SD = .86$).

MSI. This was measured using one item: “I had impaired ability to work (job-related, school work, volunteer activities) because of mass shootings.” Responses were rated on a 0 (“not at all”) to 4 (“nearly every day over the last 2 weeks”) Likert scale ($\bar{x} = 1.32$; $SD = 1.34$).



Results

The significant correlations for MSI were: White ($r = -.47$); Female ($r = -.16$); Age ($r = -.39$); and Republican ($r = .11$). In addition, MSA and MSI have a correlation of $r = .35$, accounting for approximately 12% of shared variance. There was a significant correlation between MSA and White ($r = -.14$) and a significant correlation between those who were older and Republican ($r = .14$). Overall, these correlations suggest that non-Whites tended to report more worry and anxiety. For gender and political affiliation, females and Republicans tend to have more MSI than males and non-Republicans. For age, the older the person the less prone to MSI they tended to be and the more likely they were Republican. The multiple regression analysis for MSA revealed unique demographic predictors: Age ($\beta = -.037$); White ($\beta = -.131$); Female ($\beta = .053$); and Republicans ($\beta = .101$). In addition, MSI had the unique predictors of Age ($\beta = -.246$); White ($\beta = -.380$); Female ($\beta = -.117$); and Republicans ($\beta = .158$). Overall, 2.2% of MSA variability and 30.4% of MSI variability was accounted for by demographic variables.



Discussion

Although MSA and MSI are related, they appear to be distinct constructs as they only account for about 10% shared variance, leaving 90% of variance up to some other factors. Demographics account for more of this variance in our mass-shooting constructs. For MSI, participant demographics constitute 30.4% of the variance. For MSA, demographics accounted for 2.2% of the variance; congruent with other studies. Specifically, MSI has been more prominent in non-Whites, particularly in Hispanics and African Americans, females, and younger individuals (American Psychological Association, 2019; Bardeen, Kumpula, & Orcutt, 2013; Brenan, 2019; Ducharme, 2018; Jones & Saad, 2019). Similar findings were reported on the relationship between MSA and non-Whites (Brenan, 2019) and the positive relationship between age and Republicanism (Maniam & Smith, 2017).

However, inconsistent with the literature was the positive relationship between Democratic ideals and MSI (Newman & Harman, 2019). We also found that Republicans had significantly more mass shooting-related distress than non-Republicans. Perhaps this finding reflects Republicans’ fears regarding stricter gun control or gun forfeiture (Hancock & Haldeman, 2017; Herszenhorn & Lichtblau, 2016; Porfiri, Sattanapalle, Nakayama, Macinko, & Sipahi, 2019). Overall, this study shows that demographics play a prominent and predictive role in determining who may be affected by MSA and MSI. This study shows congruency with past research and determines emphasizes the importance of demographic factors in predicting mass shootings related constructs. This research is vital for those counseling, identifying, or researching potential individuals who may experience MSA and MSI.