



The Dynamics of Psychological Trauma: A Review of the Literature on Causes, Impacts, and Recovery Approaches

Ajeng Adiliya, IGAA Noviekayati

Master of Psychology Program, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 e-mail: ajengadiliya21@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Psychological trauma is a complex condition that impacts on various aspects of an individual's life. This study aims to review the literature relating to the causal factors, consequences and recovery strategies of psychological trauma. Applying a literature review approach, this article examines a number of empirical studies and related theories to understand the dynamics of trauma. Based on the analysis, psychological trauma can be triggered by a number of causes, such as violent experiences, natural disasters or profound loss. The impact includes emotional, cognitive, physical and social aspects. Recovery strategies include cognitive-behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, body-based therapy, and community-focused interventions. This research is expected to provide a better understanding in designing more efficient interventions to address psychological trauma.

Keywords: psychological trauma, causes of trauma, impact of trauma, trauma recovery, literature review

Introduction

Psychological trauma is a profound emotional reaction to an event that significantly threatens or disrupts a person's psychological balance. Trauma can result from personal experiences such as threats to safety, a profound sense of loss, or an inability to cope with a situation.

(Van der Kolk, 2014). Several studies have shown that psychological trauma often has significant long-term impacts on a person's mental and physical health. Therefore, it is important to understand the causes, impacts and recovery approaches of trauma and support the recovery of affected.

Psychological trauma is a profound emotional response to an event that severely threatens or disrupts a person's psychological balance. According to Herman (1997), trauma not only affects an individual's emotional state but also involves profound changes in the way they view the world, interpersonal relationships and themselves. Van der Kolk (2014) adds that trauma often leaves a lasting physical and emotional "imprint", making it difficult for individuals to feel safe again even after the threat has passed.

Various theories have been developed to understand trauma. Cognitive-behavioral models highlight how maladaptive thinking and negative beliefs can amplify trauma symptoms, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Meanwhile, biopsychosocial theories emphasize the importance of interactions between biological, psychological and social factors in determining an individual's response to trauma (Briere & Scott, 2015).

Trauma can have a variety of causes, including violent experiences, natural disasters, profound loss, or adverse childhood experiences. Its impact is multidimensional, encompassing emotional, cognitive, physical and social impairments. In the context of recovery, approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure therapy, and body-based interventions have proven effective in helping individuals recover from trauma.

The main purpose of this literature review is to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of psychological trauma based on the studies that have been conducted. Thus, the results of this study can serve as a reference for practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in the field of mental health.

Methods

This study used the literature review method, which involves collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing information from relevant scientific articles. Data were obtained from various academic database sources, such as PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The selected articles met the following inclusion criteria:

1. Articles published within the last 10 years (2013-2023).
2. Focuses on the theme of psychological trauma, including causes, effects, and recovery methods.
3. Written in English or Indonesian.

4. Articles that include empirical studies, meta-analyses, or theoretical reviews.

The selection process was conducted systematically using the keywords "psychological trauma," "trauma recovery," "trauma impact," and "trauma intervention." Relevant articles were then analyzed to identify patterns of findings, limitations, and research recommendations.

Results

Table 1. Journal Review Results

Reference	Study objectives	Methods	Key results
BRIERE & SCOTT (2015)	Assessing trauma from violence	Empirical Study	Trauma from violence has a significant impact on mental health, including the risk of PTSD.
NERIA ET AL. (2011)	The impact of natural disasters on trauma	Meta-analysis	Disaster victims are more susceptible to PTSD, especially if they have suffered a major loss.
BONANNO (2004)	Human resilience to loss	Theory Review	Most individuals showed high resilience despite experiencing profound loss.
HERMAN (1997)	Complex trauma in childhood experiences	Theoretical Review	Traumatic childhood experiences affect interpersonal relationships and adult emotion regulation.
VAN DER KOLK (2014)	Trauma and the mind-body connection	Theoretical and Intervention Studies	Body-based approaches such as yoga and mindfulness effective in trauma recovery.

❖ Causes of Psychological Trauma

Psychological trauma can be caused by a variety of experiences involving threats or extreme stress. Some of the main categories of trauma causes include:

- **Violence:** Experiences of physical, emotional or sexual violence are often a major cause of trauma, especially if they occur within a close environment, such as a family or partner (Briere & Scott, 2015).
- **Natural Disasters:** Events such as earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and forest fires can leave a deeply traumatizing impact, especially if individuals lose their homes or loved ones (Neria et al., 2011).
- **Profound Loss:** Loss of a loved one, divorce, or a major failure in life can trigger emotional trauma (Bonanno, 2004).
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences:** Experiences such as neglect, abuse, or living in a conflicted environment contribute to complex trauma in adulthood (Herman, 1997).

❖ Impact of Psychological Trauma

Trauma affects individuals in multidimensional ways, including:

- **Emotional:** Traumatized individuals often experience anxiety, depression, guilt, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These symptoms can persist in the long term if not treated properly (Van der Kolk, 2014).
- **Cognitive:** Impairments in cognitive function include difficulty concentrating, memory impairment, thought distortion, and obsessive thoughts about the traumatic event.
- **Physical:** Trauma may cause psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches, indigestion, or sleep disturbances.

- **Social:** Individuals often experience social isolation, difficulty in establishing interpersonal relationships, and problems in the work or family environment (Herman, 1997).

❖ Trauma Recovery Approach

Various recovery approaches have been developed to help individuals recover from trauma. Here are some commonly used methods:

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** This therapy helps individuals identify and change negative thought patterns associated with traumatic experiences. Research shows the effectiveness of CBT in reducing PTSD symptoms (Beck, 2011).
- **Exposure Therapy:** This approach involves gradual confrontation of traumatic memories to help individuals process the associated emotions (Foa et al., 2007).
- **Body-Based Therapy:** Approaches such as yoga, mindfulness, and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) help integrate the physical and psychological aspects of trauma recovery (Van der Kolk, 2014).
- **Community-based Interventions:** Social support from the community can help individuals feel supported and reduce feelings of isolation. Community-based programs also often provide coping skills training.

Conclusion

Psychological trauma is a complex phenomenon with varied causes and impacts. Effective recovery approaches require a deep understanding of individual needs and multi-faceted support, including psychological therapies, social support and community-based interventions. Further research is needed to develop innovative and evidence-based recovery methods, so as to improve the quality of life of traumatized individuals.

Reference

- Beck, A. T. (2011). *Cognitive therapy of personality disorders*. Guilford Press.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience. *American Psychologist*, 59(1), 20-28.
- Briere, J., & Scott, C. (2015). *Principles of trauma therapy: A guide to symptoms, evaluation, and treatment*. Sage Publications.
- Foa, E. B., Hembree, E. A., & Rothbaum, B. O. (2007). *Prolonged exposure therapy for PTSD: Emotional processing of traumatic experiences*. Oxford University Press.
- Herman, J. L. (1997). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*. Basic Books.
- Neria, Y., Nandi, A., & Galea, S. (2011). Post-traumatic stress disorder following disasters: a systematic review. *Psychological Medicine*, 41(4), 767-780.
- Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Penguin Books.