

Investigating Role of Traumatic Events in a Pakistani Sample

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Abstract : The claim that traumatic events influence the recalled memories and mental health has received mixed empirical support. This study examines the memories of a sample drawn from Pakistan, a country that has witnessed many life-changing socio-political events, wars, and natural disasters in 72 years of its history. A sample of 210 senior citizens (Mage = 64.35, SD = 6.33) was recruited from Pakistan. The aim was to investigate if participants retrieved more memories related to past traumatic events using a word-cueing technique. Each participant reported ten memories to ten neutral cue words. The results revealed that past traumatic events were not adversely affecting the memories and mental health of participants. When memories were plotted with respect to the ages at which the events happened, a pronounced bump at 11-20 years of age was seen. Memories within as well as outside of the bump were mostly positive. The multilevel logistic regression modelling showed that the memories recalled were personally important and played a role in enhancing resilience. The findings revealed that despite facing an array of ethnic, religious, political, economic, and social conflicts, the participants were resilient, recalled predominantly positive memories, and had intact mental health. The findings have clinical implications in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). The patients can be made aware of their negative emotions, troublesome/traumatic memories, and the distorted thinking patterns and their memories can be restructured. The findings can also be used to teach Memory Specificity Training (MEST) by psycho-educating the patients around changes in memory functioning and enhancing the recall of memories, which are more specific, vivid, and filled with sensory details.

Keywords : cognitive behavioral therapy, memories, mental health, resilience, trauma

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