

Exploring the Link between Hoarding Disorder and Trauma: A Scoping Review

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Abstract : Trauma is increasingly recognized as an important construct that has health implications for those who struggle with various mental health issues. For those individuals who meet the criteria for a diagnosis of hoarding disorder (HD), many have experienced some form of trauma. Further, some of the therapeutic interventions for those with HD can further perpetuate or magnify the experience of trauma. Therefore, the aim of this scoping review is to identify and document the nature and extent of research evidence related to trauma as it connects with HD. This review was guided by the questions, 'How can our understanding of the trauma cycle help us to better appreciate the experiences of individuals who hoard, and how will a trauma informed lens inform the interventions for hoarding disorder? A comprehensive literature search was performed to identify original studies that contained the words "hoarding" and "trauma." PsychINFO, "EBSCO host," "CINAHL" and "PubMed" were searched between January 2005 and April 2021. Articles were screened by three reviewers. Data extracted included publication date, demographics, study design, type of analysis, and noted connections between hoarding and trauma. Of the 329 articles, all duplicates, articles on hoardings of animals, articles not in English, and those without full-text availability were removed. Five categories were found in the remaining 45 articles, including (a) traumatic and stressful life events; (b) the link between posttraumatic stress disorder, trauma, and hoarding; (c) the relationships between different comorbidities, trauma, and hoarding; (d) the lack of early emotional expression and other forms of parental deprivation; and (e) the role of attachment. Lastly, the literature explains how the links between hoarding and trauma are difficult to study due to the highly stigmatized identities with this population. The review provided strong support for the connections between the experience of trauma and HD. What is missing from the literature is the use of a trauma-informed lens to better account for the ways in which hoarding disorder is understood. Other missing pieces in the literature are the potential uses of a trauma-informed lens to enhance the therapeutic process, to understand and reduce treatment attrition, and to improve treatment outcomes. The application of a trauma informed lens could improve our understanding of effective interactions among clients, families, and communities and improve the education around hoarding-related matters. Exploring the connections between trauma and HD can improve therapeutic delivery and destigmatize the experience of dealing with clutter and hoarding concerns. This awareness can also provide health care professionals with both the language and skills to liberate them from a reductionist view on HD.

Keywords : hoarding, attachment, parental deprivation, trauma

Conference Title : ICCCP 2021 : International Conference on Clinical and Counseling Psychology

Conference Location : Vancouver, Canada

Conference Dates : September 23-24, 2021