

EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURALLY ADAPTED TRAUMA-FOCUSED
COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY FOR MEDIA EXPOSURE INDUCED
SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Professional Psychology)

Institute of Professional Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Traumatic experiences are part of human life. Direct trauma has the potential to develop such issues as depression, anxiety, and PTSD in affectees. Indirect exposure to trauma through news, social media outlets and other individuals' direct suffering also has the similar capacity of creating distress for which therapy may be required. The current research aimed to assess the effectiveness of culturally adapted trauma-focused cognitive behaviour therapy in reducing media exposure induced secondary traumatic stress in university students using two modalities, face-to-face and self-help based. As arguably, there is dearth of research on prevalence of media exposure induced secondary traumatic stress in university students, the current research thus also aimed to assess the prevalence of media exposure induced secondary traumatic stress in university students along with understanding the predictive role of cognitive distortions as risk factor in this regard. Sample for the study was selected through purposive sampling from university students, ages ranging from 18 to 25 years, belonging to private and public universities of Karachi. For assessing the prevalence, sample size was $N=514$; for the intervention, sample size was $N=90$ ($n=30$ intervention group 1 face-to-face modality, $n=30$ intervention group 2 self-help modality, $n=30$ waitlist control group). Data was collected using Secondary Traumatic Stress Media-Induced Questionnaire (Comstock & Platania, 2017), and Cognitive Distortions Questionnaire (De Oliveira et al., 2015). The intervention was based on "Basid ki Kahani", a culturally adapted trauma-focused self-help based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy manual, developed by Pakistan Association of Cognitive Therapists (Naeem et al., 2016). The intervention group 1, face-to-face modality received face-to-face sessions with the researcher while the intervention group 2, self-help modality received a pre intervention briefing session to orient them about the process of using the self-help resource. They were then required to practice the techniques of the resource material on their own for 9 weeks. After 4 weeks, follow-up was done with intervention group 2 to ensure that the techniques were being practiced as required. Results indicated that that more than 50% of the survey sample reported to have media exposure induced secondary traumatic stress with cognitive distortions playing a significantly predictive role in this regard.

Along with this, both modalities were effective in reducing media exposure induced secondary traumatic stress in university students, however, face to face modality was found to be more effective compared to self help modality. This study contributes towards therapeutic literature of trauma in Pakistan. As it also establishes self-help as a viable tool for reducing symptoms of secondary trauma, it may lead to bridge the gap between demand and supply of psychotherapy. The findings that media may contribute towards development of secondary traumatic stress may also lead to policy change regarding media censorship. Awareness campaigns may be run for enhancing public understanding and psychoeducation may be provided as prophylaxis against impact of traumatic events on people.

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