

NEWSLETTER

Counselling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

Issue 1 | February, 2025

A SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION BY LUMS PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS IN LIGHT OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

We are thrilled to share a remarkable contribution from our psychology students at LUMS. Their dedication and passion for mental health advocacy have led to the creation of this insightful newsletter designed to support and educate fellow students on well-being. This initiative reflects their commitment to fostering a culture of awareness, empathy, and community care within LUMS.

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DOES CHILDHOOD TRAUMA LEAD TO MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES?

ZAINAB RANA



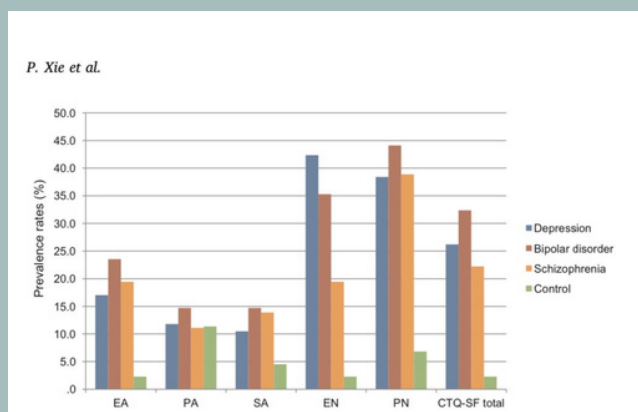
WHAT IS CHILDHOOD TRAUMA?

“It is not the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind”

About 1 in 4 children experience potentially traumatic events before their third birthday. Childhood trauma can be understood as going through physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect.

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

Research strongly demonstrates that early life adversity has a negative impact on mental health. This is proven in a study conducted in Australia on mother-child pairs, which showed significant associations between depression and emotional abuse and neglect and a similar correlation between PTSD and sexual and physical abuse. A study conducted in China also offers evidence that childhood trauma is more prevalent in psychiatric patients than other participants. The following chart displays this as all types of maltreatments are reported more by those who are diagnosed with psychological disorders.



TIPS FOR HEALING

1. Seek Professional Help: Therapy can be transformative. Consider trauma-focused therapies like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).
2. Build a Support Network: Engage with supportive friends or support groups to share experiences and coping strategies.
3. Practice Mindfulness: Techniques such as meditation and deep breathing can help manage stress and anxiety.
4. Educate Yourself: Understanding the effects of trauma can empower individuals to seek help and support others.

A 23 YEAR OLD'S PERSONAL ACCOUNT

“As the oldest child, I realize now that my parents' frequent fights have left a lasting impact on me. When I hear screaming or intense arguments, I still feel that familiar panic rising inside me. It's like I'm transported back to those moments, feeling the urgent need to fix the situation. This automatic response, born from my childhood trauma, definitely affects my mental health as an adult. I find myself easily stressed by conflict and always on alert for signs of tension. It's clear that those early experiences have shaped how I react to stress and handle relationships today”



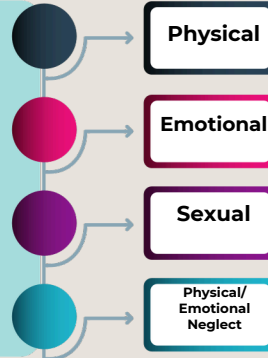
Understanding Childhood Trauma and Its Impact on Mental Health

Daima Hassan



What is Childhood Trauma?

refers to experiences of distressing or harmful events during a child's developmental years, such as exposure to death, serious injury, sexual violence, or other forms of abuse ->



COGNITION

- Negative self-image
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Impaired decision-making
- Skewed perceptions of danger and adversity

MENTAL HEALTH

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- PTSD
- Personality disorders
- Schizophrenia
- Suicidality

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Obesity
- Eating disorders
- Chronic illnesses (e.g., ischemic heart disease, chronic lung disease)
- Impaired immune function
- Cardiovascular disease
- Sleep difficulties

IMPACTS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Factors that Mitigate the Impact of Childhood Trauma

- Resilience: The ability to adapt and recover from adversity.
- Therapeutic Interventions: Approaches such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) that reduce trauma-related symptoms.
- Supportive Environments: Nurturing and stable relationships that provide emotional support.
- Coping Strategies: Effective techniques to manage stress and emotions, including participation in physical activities.

Other Factors Influencing Mental Health

- Genetic Vulnerability: Heritable traits that predispose individuals to mental health disorders.
- Cultural Context: Social stigma and cultural attitudes affecting mental health perceptions and treatment.
- Socioeconomic Status: Economic hardships that can exacerbate mental health issues.
- Personality Traits: Characteristics like neuroticism that increase the risk of developing mental health problems.
- Environmental Stressors: Ongoing life challenges that can trigger or worsen mental health conditions.

EMOTIONS

- Emotional dysregulation
- Chronic emotional distress
- Anxiety
- Helplessness
- Increased vulnerability to stress
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts

BRAIN DEVELOPEMENT

- Alterations in the amygdala, leading to hypervigilance.
- Changes in the hippocampus, affecting memory and emotional regulation.
- Impacts on the prefrontal cortex, resulting in impaired decision-making and emotional control.

BEHAVIOURAL

- Substance abuse Engagement in risky behaviors (e.g., unsafe sexual practices)
- Social isolation Increased likelihood of revictimization in adulthood
- Difficulty falling asleep and experiencing nightmares

Understanding Childhood Trauma and Its Long-Term Mental Health Implications

Manahil Raafey



Overview

Childhood trauma includes adverse experiences like abuse or neglect that can impact adult mental health. However, certain mitigating factors—such as supportive relationships and effective interventions—can prevent these experiences from leading to mental health problems. Recognizing the factors influencing these outcomes is essential for developing effective interventions and support systems to promote resilience and well-being in affected individuals.



1 in 5
children experience some form of trauma



Social support substantially reduces the likelihood of PTSD



Trauma-Focused CBT boosts resilience and recovery

Assessing the Impact of Childhood Trauma

Functional Impairment:

Studies show that individuals with a history of childhood trauma may experience difficulties in daily activities and social interactions. For example, women with PTSD from childhood abuse often exhibit reduced daily movement and activity levels.

Mental Health Risks:

Childhood trauma is linked to a heightened likelihood of developing mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD. However, it is important to note that not all individuals who experience trauma will go on to develop these conditions due to protective factors and genetic predisposition.

Biological Predisposition from Epigenetic Changes

Research indicates that epigenetic changes can heighten children's vulnerability to mental health issues. For example, children born to mothers who have experienced trauma may show altered gene expressions, increasing their susceptibility to anxiety and PTSD.

Protective Factors Against Mental Health Challenges

Supportive Relationships

Positive relationships with caregivers can help reduce the impact of trauma. Maternal support has been shown to lower stress responses in children, aiding in emotional regulation and resilience.

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)

TF-CBT is a proven intervention for children who have experienced trauma, significantly reducing symptoms of PTSD. It addresses immediate distress and promotes coping strategies, helping to mitigate long-term mental health issues.

Biological Resilience

As children grow, the development of robust neural connections in the brain can protect them against trauma-related mental health challenges. Strong connections between the prefrontal cortex and amygdala enhance emotional regulation and resilience.

Impact of Childhood Trauma on Adult Mental Health



Warrishah Samee

Disrupted Emotional and Psychological Development Childhood trauma, such as abuse, neglect, or witnessing violence, disrupts emotional and psychological development. It leads to long-term mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and personality disorders

2) Risk of Depression and Anxiety: ×

- Trauma increases susceptibility to recurring episodes of major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder.
- Trauma survivors are more likely to develop anxiety-related disorders, including social anxiety and panic disorders.

4) Attachment and Relationship Issues: ×

- Childhood trauma, particularly when it involves neglect or inconsistent caregiving, can lead to insecure attachment styles. Insecure attachment increases the risk of developing mood disorders, as these individuals may struggle with interpersonal relationships and emotional stability.
- Trauma survivors often struggle to trust others, leading to social withdrawal or isolation. This can exacerbate feelings of depression and loneliness, fueling mood disorders.

3) Brain Development and Stress:

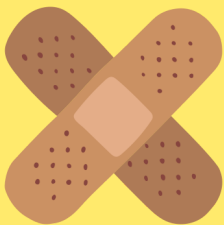
The developing brain is vulnerable to trauma, with heightened cortisol levels (stress hormone) affecting areas responsible for emotional regulation and cognition. •Results in difficulty managing emotions, poor coping mechanisms, and challenges in forming healthy relationships.

5) Coping Strategies: ×

- Individuals often resort to substance abuse, eating disorders, or self-harm to cope with emotional distress. •These maladaptive behaviors may temporarily numb the pain but lead to further mental health deterioration.

☆ Importance of Early Intervention:

Early therapeutic intervention, like trauma- focused cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), is crucial for recovery. •Addressing trauma early helps improve emotional regulation, build resilience, and promote healthier coping strategies.



LUMS

COUNSELLING AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Let's Break the Misconception

Childhood
Trauma &
Mental Health
Hasan Abdul Khaliq



Trauma's Impact

Have you experienced emotional or physical abuse, or neglect early in life? If so, you might be concerned about how these experiences could affect your mental health today. It's true that such trauma can heighten the risk of developing mental disorders, including depression and anxiety.

However, it's crucial to know that these outcomes are **not guaranteed**. Research reveals that stressors encountered later in life often have a more substantial impact than the trauma experienced in childhood. This insight can empower you to focus more on current healing practices rather than feeling bound by past experiences.

Healing Strategies

Healing is deeply personal and starts when you take stock of your current life circumstances. It involves **making peace with your past**, forgiving those who may have hurt you, and importantly, forgiving yourself for the ways you coped. This process isn't about forgetting—it's about **giving yourself permission to move forward**. If you find yourself struggling with the remnants of your past, remember that therapy or supportive community groups can offer the necessary relief and guidance. There's strength in acknowledging where you need support, and reaching out can be your first step towards a brighter, healthier future.

Remember, help is always given at LUMS to those who ask for it.

Let's shine a light on mental health together!

DOES SUBSTANCE ABUSE ALWAYS STEM FROM MENTAL ILLNESS?

Humna Abid

SUBSTANCE ABUSE IS NOT SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE OUTRIGHT DISCLOSE. THE MAIN PROBLEM ARE THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES OR THE STIGMA ATTACHED TO IT. HENCE, USUALLY PEOPLE DON'T RECEIVE TREATMENT.



SUBSTANCE ABUSE IS COMMON AMONG PEOPLE THAT ENCOUNTER EXTREME STRESS IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT. ESPECIALLY IF ITS DURING THEIR EARLY CHILDHOOD OR DUE TO PEER PRESSURE.



STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT THERE IS A HEREDITARY COMPONENT TO ADDICTION. EXTNSIVE RESEARCH HAS FOUND A CORRELATION BETWEEN SOME GENES AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE. NOT ONLY THAT BUT RELATIVES SUFFERING FROM ADDICTION INCREASES A PERSON'S RISK TO ADDICTION.



HOWEVER, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESSES CAN OCCUR CO-CURRENTLY. CONSEQUENTLY, PEOPLE CAN BE A VICTIM TO ADDICTION IF THEY TURN TO USING SUBSTANCES FOR COPING WITH THE EFFECTS OF MENTAL ILLNESSES.



Mental Health & Substance Abuse

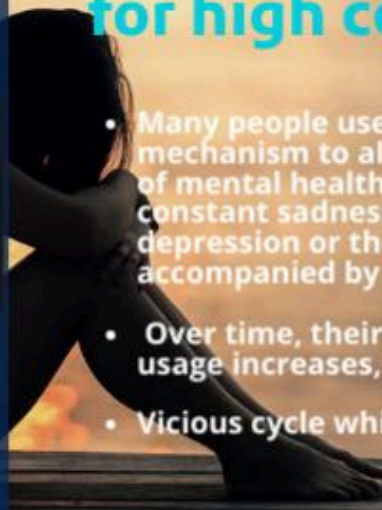
Faraz Ajmal Chishti



40-60 percent of people suffering from mental health also suffer from Drug Abuse. This simultaneous presence, known as comorbidity makes people assume that all drug abuse cases are result of mental health disorder

Plausible Explanation for high comorbidity

- Many people use drugs as a coping mechanism to alleviate the symptoms of mental health disorders, such as constant sadness associated with depression or the state of panic accompanied by anxiety
- Over time, their dependence on drug usage increases, resulting in addiction.
- Vicious cycle which keeps on repeating



Understanding the Complex Connection

to conclude that all substance abuse cases stem from mental health disorders would be a very reductionist way of thinking.

Nature vs Nurture

Multiple factors are responsible

Additional factors that increase the chance of Drug Abuse

Genetics



Genetic vulnerability due to family history increases your chance of developing addiction by 50 percent

Environment



Adverse childhood experiences such as abuse significantly increases your chance of developing substance abuse

Personality



positive correlation between impulsivity, and substance abuse, where individuals demonstrating impulsive behavior and chronic stress are more likely to develop substance abuse.

Social



Teenagers who are involved in the company of friends and peers where substance use is every day are more likely to develop an addiction themselves without any prior mental health disorder

We must be careful while analyzing drug abuse cases and should refrain from giving any explanation without first investigating all the relevant factors and only then should we look at a plausible treatment which addresses the underlying condition resulting in drug abuse.





OCD & Perfectionism

Zainab Mujtaba

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a behavioural and mental disorder in which individuals experience intrusive and distressing thoughts about something (obsession) and in response perform an action to ease the anxiety (compulsion) which on its own can be distressing. Perfectionism is a personality trait.

OCD is NOT perfectionism. This is a stereotype which is commonly seen, and it's completely wrong!

Perfectionism is a



(a type of OCD!!)

When the two are taken as synonyms, then people with socially unconventional types of OCD (like Pure-O, hoarding, doubt and harm, and more) tend to be either not taken seriously or shunned away.

So no! Being neat is not OCD, liking clean spaces is not OCD, and being picky about organisation is not OCD!