



Awareness about the Conception of Trauma

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Abstract

Traumatic events and situations are common and prevalent worldwide; there have been number of occurrences and events that take place in the life of a person that exposes him to trauma. For example, death of a close relative or a friend is such an instance that causes a traumatic situation. Trauma is even considered to be common amongst not only adults but also children, for example, if a child is behaving mischievous and a parent screams or slaps the child then he may feel that he has been forced into a traumatic situation. The main motive behind writing this research paper is to identify the meaning of trauma, major types of trauma, effects of trauma, and treatments for trauma. Individuals are made to understand what trauma is, what signs and symptoms it illustrates and what kind of treatments are helpful, when a person has experienced a traumatic situation.

Keywords: Trauma; Abuse; Assault; Treatments; Effects

Understanding the meaning of trauma

Trauma is a term that is used to refer to negative events that cause distress as well as to distress itself. Trauma has been understood as the direct personal experience of an event or a situation that involves actual or threatened death or a serious injury, or threat to one's physical integrity, witnessing an event that involves death, injury or threatening of physical integrity of another person, or becoming aware about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, torture, pain experienced by a family member, relative or a close friend. The person who has witnessed or experienced traumatic incidents will depict intense fear, helplessness, sorrow and horror. Children who have experienced traumatic events will depict troubled and disordered behavior. There have been list of traumatic events, including combat, sexual and physical assault, robbery, being kidnapped, taken hostage, terrorist attacks, torture, infliction of pain and injury, calamities and disasters, severe automobile accidents, life threatening illnesses, rape and sexual assault, harassment, severe humiliation and punishment, accidents, wars, causing somebody serious injury by violent assault and childhood sexual abuse [1].

Trauma has the capacity to effect the physical, emotional and intellectual development of the individuals. Especially when it is experienced in early life. The effects of trauma are more detrimental upon children as compared to adults. Trauma can profoundly influence the capability of the individuals to get engaged in any tasks or activities. It diminishes the abilities of the individuals to concentrate. On the other hand, it also becomes difficult for the individuals to build meaningful relationships. Therefore, when individuals experience trauma, they need to make sure, they do not let it have a major effect upon their lives. In other words, individuals need to prevent it from assuming a major form.

The increase in the elderly population within the country has been demonstrated by various demographic studies. The prevalence of trauma among the elderly population has been increasing significantly in the past few years. There have been establishment of trauma centers and they have been equipped to cope up with the problems that are associated with trauma regarding the geriatric population. Since the elderly trauma victims are more critical at the initial stage, they require admittance into the hospitals on

a frequent basis. When the elderly individuals experience trauma, it has a major impact upon their mental as well as physical health conditions. As a result of trauma, there have been an increase in the admittance of the elderly individuals in Intensive Care Units [2].

Trauma is characterized by the real existence of lesion, wound or injury. This is caused to the individuals, physically as well as mentally. The other major causes of trauma are, when the elderly individuals lose their beloved family members, relatives or friends. When elderly individuals are close to other individuals and when they get separated from them, then they feel traumatized. Trauma causes suffering and pain to the elderly individuals to a major extent. The grievous injuries and the organic and mental process that are following it, are considered to be due to certain preceding or concurrent external events. The processes that are originating the traumatic lesions are associated with the higher occurrences of pre-existing health problems and the post-trauma complications. Hospitalization can lead to complications due to prolonged immobilization, higher risk of iatrogenic diseases and post-traumatic stress that is characterised by insomnia, distress, depression, loss of trust and panic disorder [2].

In the present existence, the care delivery in terms of health of the elderly individuals has become a priority concern with the view to the progressive increase of life expectancy over the past few decades. Taking into consideration, the significant increase of the elderly population, the high mortality rate is due to trauma. Public health is regarded as one of the major areas that put emphasis upon taking care of the health care needs and requirements of the individuals, particularly the elderly. In acquiring an understanding of the relationship between the occurrence of traumas and its consequences upon the elderly individuals is an important area for health team knowledge. It can have an effect upon care delivery, as well as propose strategies for health promotion and prevention of trauma. The major objective is to bring about improvements in the life and health conditions of the elderly individuals [2].

Major types of trauma

There have been numerous ways in which an individual can be traumatized; a trauma is experienced by every individual during his lifetime, it is hard to find an individual who can escape from a traumatic event, for example, loss of a family member or a relative occurs in every body's family all over the world and is a traumatic event. The major types of trauma includes: [1]

- **Natural Disasters:** Natural disasters can be defined as the large scale, which are not normally caused by humans; these are injury and death producing environmental occurrences that unfavorably affects a considerable number of people.
- **Mass Interpersonal Violence:** This is the kind of violence that involves injuries and even loss of life and productivity on a massive scale; but it is not considered to be a war. It occurs in the framework of bombing or explosions.
- **Large-Scale Transportation Accidents:** Transportation accidents involve happenings such as airline crashes, train accidents and ship accidents. These accidents involve high fatality rates and large number of victims, and the occurrence of these kinds of accidents is also not easily determined.
- **House or Other Domestic Fires:** House or domestic fires include the fires which take place within a house due to smoking, electrical short circuits, and gas explosions due to leaking of propane tanks, stoves or heaters. Physical injuries caused due to occurrence of these fires can be extremely traumatic.
- **Motor Vehicle Accidents:** Motor vehicle accidents are also experienced by significant number of individuals in India and 20% of the individuals within the United States have experienced a serious motor vehicle accident. These accidents can cause minor as well as major injuries and damages, but the experience of the individual regarding the motor vehicle accidents is always traumatic.
- **Rape and Sexual Assault:** Rape and sexual assault has been encountered by girls and women of all age groups in India from three years of age until 70 years of age. This is a deadly incident that plunges a person into deep trauma for even long term and always proves to be extremely devastating.
- **Stranger Physical Assault:** Stranger physical assault refers to muggings, beatings, ambushing, stabbings, shootings, attempted strangulations and other violent actions against a person not well known to the assailant; the main motive behind this kind of attempt is often robbery, or anger or personal enmity that take place because of some reason.
- **Partner Battery:** This is also known as wife battering, spouse abuse or domestic violence; it is defined as physically and sexually assaultive behavior by one adult against the other in an intimate, sexual, and usually cohabiting relationship. It also involves emotional abuse and even threats against children, pets or property.
- **Torture:** Torture is defined as any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental is intentionally inflicted upon a person. Methods of torture involve both physical and psychological techniques, including beatings, strangulation, electrical shock, various forms of sexual abuse, causing burn injuries, assault, breaking of bones, sensory deprivation,

threats of death or mutilation, mock executions, sleep and food deprivation, blaming and harassing, and forcing towards humiliating acts.

- **War:** War is regarded to be a powerful and a major source which leads to immense loss of life and causes psychological turbulence on a large scale. War includes witnessing and participating in atrocities, undergoing rape, capture as well as confinement, torture and extreme physical dispossession. War involves extremely wide range of traumatic experiences including death, disfigurement, physical injury, loss of property and productivity.
- **Child Abuse:** In India, even children who are below ten years of age come in contact with abusive treatment such as sexual harassment, rape, torture, beating and verbal abuse; many children are psychologically abused and neglected, at such a young age when they face these kinds of distressing situations, they feel highly traumatized and disturbed.
- **Emergency Worker Exposure to Trauma:** Emergency workers go through a traumatic situation in ways such as acid burns, especially on the face, fatal injury, severe burns, dismemberment and extreme victim distress. It normally happens when a firefighter, medical personnel, rescue workers or paramedics are helping these traumatized victims, they themselves develop a form of explicit traumatization.

Effects of trauma upon elderly individuals

The effects of trauma impose detrimental effects upon the lives of the elderly individuals. The major effects upon their health conditions are, postural hypotension, weakening of the arms and legs affecting strength or movement, balance difficulty and difficulty in the ability to transfer from the bed to the chair. In other words, the elderly individuals experience problems in carrying out the activities of daily living. In addition to the physiologic alterations of the ageing process, the major effects of trauma are related to the social and environmental conditions. These have been stated as follows:

- **Living in Seclusion:** When elderly individuals are affected by trauma, then they normally keep to themselves and do not take pleasure in communicating with others.
- **Loss of Interest:** They experience a loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed. As in the past, they took pleasure in number of activities, creative, religious, social, cultural, recreational and so forth. But experiencing trauma enables them to lose interest in various activities.
- **Depression:** Trauma causes depression on large scale. When elderly individuals experiences trauma, they feel depressed. Depression is primarily characterized by stay-

ing within the house and they do not feel pleasurable in going to various places, or functions or even in visiting their relatives and friends.

- **Pain and Suffering:** When trauma is experienced as a result of physical injuries or wounds, then the elderly individuals experience pain and suffering to a major extent. This usually have a severe effect upon their physical and mental well-being.
- **Pressure and Anxiety:** The elderly individuals, suffering from trauma, experience pressure and anxiety, when they need to carry out any tasks or functions, or even when they have to obtain assistance from others.

Coping after a traumatic event

In some cases, traumatic experiences may be long term. To effectively cope up with the traumatic events, it is necessary for the elderly individuals to take into consideration certain aspects and these have been stated as follows:

- **Give Yourself Time:** One needs to provide oneself enough time to cope with distress and pressure that is the aftermath of traumatic events [3].
- **Find out what Happened:** It is necessary to conduct an analysis of the causes of occurrence of trauma. [3].
- **Share ones Worries with Other Individuals:** It is necessary to share one's worries and problems with others [3].
- **Effective Communication:** Effectively communicating with relatives, friends and caregivers in terms of the traumatic events help the elderly in adequately coping up with it.
- **Counselling and Guidance:** In case the traumatic events are severe, the elderly individuals obtain counselling and guidance facilities from professionals.
- **Take out some time for oneself:** The elderly individuals in some cases, want others to be with them all the time. It is vital for them to take out some time for oneself to effectively cope up with traumatic events.
- **Tasks and Activities:** The elderly individuals should get involved into various tasks and activities. These may include, physical, social, cultural, religious, and recreational.
- **Household Chores:** The elderly individuals, particularly women, who usually remain at home should make efforts to carry out the household chores. This would help them in remaining occupied and coping with traumatic events.
- **Watching Movies and Television Shows:** Watching movies and television shows are regarded as comforting to elderly individuals, who are living by themselves. They

feel stress-free and peaceful, when they watch movies of their interest and television shows.

- **Take Care of Health:** It is essential for the elderly individuals to obtain their proper diet and nutrition and medicines that are essential to take care of one's health.

What are the lasting effects of trauma?

Individuals who have come into contact with a traumatic situation develop certain effects that are very severe: [4].

1. **Substance, Dependence and Abuse:** Individuals get themselves indulged into delinquent acts and get accustomed to substance, dependence and abuse; their behavioral traits become very astringent and they develop an angry attitude.
2. **Personality Disorders:** In this case, especially borderline personality disorder develops within an individual. A person who has been traumatized sometimes does not even pay attention to the activities of daily living such as eating, bathing, dressing, toileting and transferring.
3. **Depression:** Depression is a common mental disorder that shows the symptoms of a depressed mood, loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self worth, isolation, lack of communication with the people around as well as those who are at a distance, disturbed sleep or appetite and poor concentration and performance in all the activities undertaken.
4. **Anxiety:** It includes post traumatic stress disorder; an individual feels very nervous, worried, concerned, apprehensive, uneasy, disquiet and fretful. Especially those who have undergone domestic violence or sexual harassment or torture or any kind of a traumatic event.
5. **Dissociative Disorders:** Dissociative disorders develop amongst some of the individuals; do not like to communicate with people around, they prefer to stay disconnected, aloof and lonely.
6. **Eating Disorders:** When individuals undergo trauma, they felt that their personality, mindset and overall health has been damaged; they refrain from eating and it is natural to develop eating disorders, if not for a long term at least for a short term.
7. **Loss of Interest in Activities:** An individual gets engaged in some or the other work or leisure or extracurricular activities such as studying, preparing meals, gardening, painting or reading or performing the household chores and so forth. Witnessing of traumatic events leads to loss of interest in these activities that were once enjoyed by the people. For example, when a domestic help is severely tortured by his employer, he will not be able to show interest in the performance of household duties.

Treatments for trauma

1. **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT):** Individuals suffering from trauma form negative viewpoints about themselves and the world around them. CBT depicts how the thoughts and ideas of an individual affect their mood and this therapy teaches them to correct the negative thinking that they have formed. CBT has proved to be advantageous for some individuals whereas for others it has not proved to be beneficial.
2. **Mindfulness Meditation:** Mindfulness is about becoming aware of what is happening in the present on a moment by moment basis; judgments are not to be made about whether a person likes or does not like what he sees around him. Mindfulness meditation is used to assist people in curbing some of the symptoms of trauma such as worry, anxiety, concern and so forth [5].
3. **Psychotherapy:** Psychotherapy usually extends to several months or years, during this time period a relationship is built up between a therapist and his patient; this relationship is used to investigate what kind of events, occurrences and experiences a person went through during his past that have led to this kind of problem.
4. **Counseling:** Counseling is related to many diverse areas and is a set of approaches and goals that are essentially aimed at helping an individual to seek solutions to his problems. There are many kinds of counseling such as career, crisis, relationship, marital, depression, trauma, anger management and so forth.
5. **Self-Help and Alternative Therapies:** There are wide range of self help and alternative therapies which can be useful for some cases of trauma; either they can be used alone or in combination with physical treatments, antidepressants or psychological treatments. Melancholic or psychotic depressions that are formed as a consequence of trauma are very unlikely to respond to self help and alternative therapies alone. Self-help and alternative therapies that may be useful for treatment include yoga, meditation, relaxation techniques, good nutrition, alcohol and drug avoidance, physical exercise, Bibliotherapy, Omega-3, St. John's Wort, light therapy and acupuncture [5].
6. **Other Therapies:** Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprogramming (EMDR), Somatic experiencing, Hakomi, and Integrative Body Psychotherapy; when trauma is caused due to severe beating, abusing and harassing, then love and friendly relationships should be created between the persons, the assailant and the victim, this would help the victim in recovering from the traumatic experience that he has suffered [6].
7. **Effective Communication:** Appropriate communication skills such as listening, speaking and responding should

be there between the two parties in a respectful and courteous manner. Amiable, effective communication and good terms and relationships do not compel a person to inflict any kind of torture or pain upon the other.

8. **Laws and Policies:** It is up to the Government to formulate appropriate laws and policies to curb traumatic events within the nation. For example, people who impose serious harm, pain, injuries, torture upon the other should not be spared and should be subjected to severe punishments and penalties. For example, in India, throwing acid upon a person leads to life imprisonment or imprisonment up to ten years and a fine up to ten lakh of rupees.
9. **Professional Individuals:** Professional counselors, medical practitioners, fire fighters and paramedics are some of the personnel who render their contribution towards creating rehabilitation and curbing the pain and injuries suffered by the traumatized individuals.
10. **Management of Finances:** Finances and monetary resources are the key aspects of survival; when an individual has been subjected to severe trauma, whether it is a natural disaster or a domestic fire or a motor vehicle accident or war; then if he has the resources and is financially capable then he will not have to face extreme problems in recovering the losses suffered. Therefore, proper financial management is also considered to be an aspect for the treatment of trauma.

Conclusion

Trauma is referred to negative occurrences and situations that cause suffering as well as any kind of agony and pain that has been encountered by an individual. There have been many kinds of trauma that human beings come in contact with; these are natural calamities and disasters, mass interpersonal violence, transportation accidents caused on a large scale, house or domestic fires, motor vehicle accidents, rape and sexual assault, stranger physical assault, partner battery, torture, war, child abuse and emergency worker exposure to trauma. These are the myriad types of trauma as well as the situations that lead to trauma.

The elderly individuals need to generate awareness in terms of the measures that are required to cope up with these psychological problems. They need to develop a social circle and form communication links with not only the individuals within the house but also the community members. They should get engaged in the implementation of task and activities on a regular basis, for instance, management of household responsibilities. They should get engaged in various activities, which may be physical, social, cultural, religious and recreational. It is vital for the individuals,

particularly in old age to take care of one's health conditions. For this purpose, it is recommended, they need to consume a healthy and a nutritious diet, get engaged in physical activities and develop positive thinking. There have been cases of elderly individuals, who experience psychological problems due to mistreatment and abuse. The elderly individuals have been subjected to crime and violence throughout the country. In order to cope up with these situations, assistance is made available to them from the government officials and other organizations. Finally, it can be stated that in some cases, psychological problems are unavoidable, but generating awareness regarding the measures, forming a social circle and taking care of one's health and well-being are regarded as indispensable.

When an individual has been subjected to any kinds of traumatic events that have been listed above, they do depict certain behavioral traits and attitudes such as getting acquainted with substance, dependence and abuse, personality disorders, depression, anxiety, dissociative disorders, eating disorders and loss of interest in all kinds of activities that at some point of time they took pleasure from. Traumatic events are detrimental, negative and impose harmful consequences, but there have been various kinds of treatments that an individual needs to consider depending upon the kind of trauma that he is suffering from. The treatments have been cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness meditation, psychotherapy, counseling, self-help and alternative therapies, other therapies, effective communication, laws and policies, assistance from professional individuals and management of finances.

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