Shared Trauma, Resilience, and Growth: a Roadmap toward Transcultural Conceptualization

Introduction

Countless communities worldwide are exposed directly and subsequently to the effects of massive-scale collective stressors, from natural disasters to human-caused. In contexts of collective adversity, healthcare providers who are also members of these communities share and interdependently affect the range of responses their patients have. We aim to conceptualize this spectrum, termed shared trauma, shared resilience, and shared growth.

Methods

In a metasynthesis, we reviewed the literature on these underacknowledged dynamics as follows:

A Model of Shared Trauma

Discussion

We propose uniquely inclusive models of shared trauma, resilience, and growth. These models reflect the cumulative effects and interplay of direct to indirect, acute to chronic, individual to collective, and historic to transgenerational factors influenced by cultural context.

Results

Most trauma and resilience research focuses on prevailing concepts and measures with questionable cross-cultural applicability. These works usually center on acute, highly distressing threats to physical safety at the individual level. The scarce literature on shared trauma describes it as a rare phenomenon, entailing conflicting messages of narrative accounts within contexts of few cultures with medium to high degrees of individualism. There has been little consideration of other non-Western and indigenous communities with more collectivist values and collective trauma histories. There is limited understanding of these concepts as they pertain to the vast majority of cultures. As a result, shared trauma, resilience, and growth have been poorly conceptualized, differentiated, or empirically researched.

Conclusions

The described models of shared trauma, resilience, and growth are a first step on the road to transcultural conceptualization. However, a more complex, finely detailed, and culturally adapted understanding of the effects of collective trauma and its cross-cultural manifestations are required to further inform care provider mental health.