

research snapshot

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Income-Assisted Single Mothers and Their Experiences with PTSD

What is this research about?

Previous research has found that women are twice as likely to encounter post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than men. If sub-groups are taken into account, homeless and income-assisted single mothers are also at a greater risk for having PTSD in their lives. Keeping in mind the different experiences that women with PTSD carry, research must take an intersecting approach to studying trauma and its impact on PTSD. That is, a series of indicators should be considered.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers introduced the intersectionality model of trauma and PTSD (IMT-PTSD). They wanted to verify cumulative adversity trauma's (CAT) impact on PTSD for single mothers with income assistance. To do so, they looked at the relationship between five variables:

CAT: The exposure to a set of trauma that gives rise to other negative problems. An emphasis was made on assault and psychology-based trauma. Income-assisted single mothers have higher rates of encountering these kinds of traumas.

Social strain: The absence or lack of social support or a poor relationship with social networks to act as a mediator between stress and mental health problems. Measured by the indicators of: self-esteem, appraisal support, and social conflict.

Agency: Personal resources or capacity to feel

What you need to know:

The impact of trauma on the PTSD of income-assisted single mothers is not lessened depending on their area of residence. Instead, their experiences differ according to where they live.

engaged, meaningful and create change. These were measured by the indicators of personal agency and interpersonal agency.

Mental health services: Self-reported use of mental health services to mediate the relationship between trauma and mental health of single mothers. Measured by the indicators of primary mental health services, and specialized mental health services.

PTSD severity: The intensity and frequency of PTSD symptoms over a 1 week period.

The researchers recruited participants by mailing those who were active caseloads at social service agencies. The criteria focused on single mothers for one or more dependent child, who had received income-assistance for 6 or more months, and who did not live with a spouse or common law partner. 247 mothers were surveyed over the telephone or online.

The researchers also wanted to intersect the impact of neighbourhoods in their testing. Using the survey data from the single mothers, they applied the definition of "priority neighbourhoods" to their analysis. That is, they made note of participants who

came from areas with:

1.5% greater number of people aged 15-24;

6.4% more immigrant families;

15.7% more visible minorities;

6.8% more lower income earners;

Making \$18, 439 less than a city's average annual household income;

And with 4.3% more lone parent households.

What did the researchers find?

The researchers confirmed CAT's impact on PTSD for single mothers with income-assistance. All of the variables tested proved to be statistically relevant. The increase of social strain and reduced agency had direct and indirect effects on PTSD. While CAT had affected the use of mental health services, these services did not have an isolated effect on PTSD. The researchers also found that their model for CAT's impact on PTSD was not moderated by the neighbourhoods where participants resided. Instead, the variables that impacted single mothers in priority neighbourhoods differed from single mothers who lived elsewhere.

How can you use this research?

Service providers and clinicians may find this research useful to inform change in their practices. Service providers should develop mental health support for single mothers on income-assistance that address past trauma and prevention. They should also look at the social and health impacts of violence, and offer intervention and resources for gender-based traumas. Clinicians should take into account social strain and agency as factors in their assessments on CTA. Capacity-building strategies that collaborate with income-assisted single mothers are also vital.

About the Researchers

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Keywords

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