

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS

Do best-evidenced trauma-focused interventions for children and young people with PTSD lead to changes in social and interpersonal domains?



BACKGROUND

1 in 6 trauma-exposed children develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Both childhood trauma and PTSD are associated with deficits in interpersonal and social domains, and these factors may also buffer risk for PTSD.

Yet, it is unclear whether our best-evidenced treatments for PTSD in children and young people address these deficits.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do best-evidenced trauma-focussed therapies for children and young people (tf-CBTs or EMDR) change social or interpersonal factors (e.g. perceived social support, social functioning) in randomised control trials, when compared with passive and active control conditions?

METHODOLOGY

- The review was preregistered on PROSPERO (CRD42023455615; 18th August 2023), and we searched 7 databases.
- Eligible studies were RCT's which compared tf-CBTs or EMDR to a passive or active control, with young people aged 5-25, and which measured an interpersonal or social outcome.
- We conducted a random-effects meta-analysis using the R package metafor upon between group post-treatment scores (Hedges G).

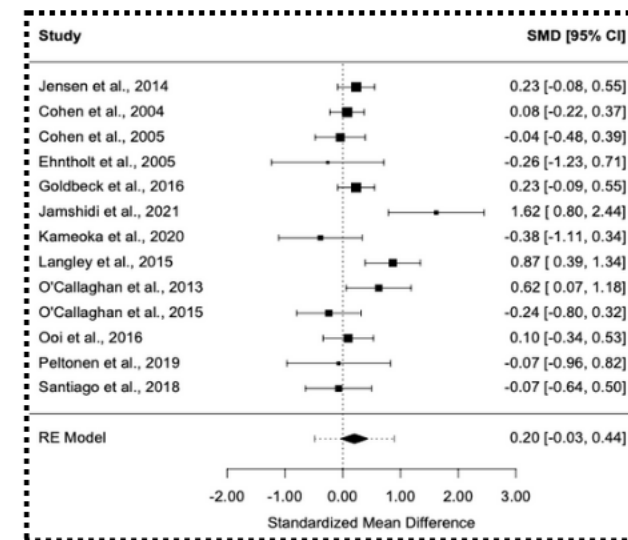


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RESULTS

- Our meta-analysis included 13 studies, which measured self report (k = 6), parent report (k = 5) or teacher report (k = 1) social skills or functioning.
- We found a small but non-significant effect favouring the evidence-based treatment versus comparison: $g = .20$, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.44], $p = .09$.
- There was substantial variability across trials, and this variability was not explained by the moderators Investigated, including type of control condition, therapy type, caregiver-involvement, or country context.



CONCLUSION

Young people may continue to have challenges with social functioning, or continue to feel that they do not have adequate support despite receiving evidence-based therapy for their PTSD.

There is very little research in this area which warrants further investigation.

Future research should focus upon a broader range of theoretically driven social and interpersonal factors, such as appraisals of one's social network, cognitions, or socially relevant neurocognitive processes.

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