

Mental healthcare providers' attitudes towards the adoption of evidence-based practice in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in South Africa

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Abstract

South African society is characterised by a high prevalence of exposure to traumatic events that can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. In treating post-traumatic stress disorder, mental healthcare providers are tasked with ensuring that their practice is evidence based. However, existing evidence indicates that the rates of adoption of evidence-based practice are generally poor. The promotion and implementation of evidence-based practice into routine clinical settings requires an understanding of the attitudes of mental healthcare providers towards these practices. This study investigated attitudes towards evidence-based practice in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. Participants were 60 mental healthcare providers (clinical/counselling psychologists, social workers, and registered counsellors) in the Western Cape Province working predominantly with trauma survivors. Participants completed a demographic survey and the Attitude Towards Evidence-Based Practice Scale, adapted to assess for attitudes towards the adoption of evidence-based practice in relation to the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. Overall, participants reported favourable attitudes towards evidence-based practice in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. Statistical analysis revealed that occupation, age, and gender significantly correlated with attitudes. Social workers and registered counsellors were more likely to report adopting evidence-based practice for post-traumatic stress disorder compared to clinical and counselling psychologists. Older participants and women also reported more favourable attitudes towards evidence-based practice. The implications of these findings are discussed.

The evidence-based practice (EBP) movement has been heralded as one of the major advances in health care. EBP is based on the idea that clinical decision-making and practice should be based on rigorous scientific evidence. EBP in psychology (EBPP) is defined as (a) the integration of the best available research evidence (b) with clinical expertise (c) in the context of the patient's values, characteristics, culture, preferences, and circumstances (American Psychological Association, 2010; American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice, 2006; McHugh & Barlow, 2012; Spring, 2007). The shift towards EBPP has been spurred by two converging developments. The first is the rapid advancement in the understanding of the nature of various psychological disorders and the related development of more precisely targeted psychological interventions. The second

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