



**Cambridge**  
International

**Professional Research Thesis**

**Titled**

**The impact of loss trauma on the mental health of  
adolescents and adults**

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# Dedication

To every beloved one who has departed, leaving behind a deep wound that never heals, causing a volcano of pain that never calms nor subsides.

To my father and mother ... may Allah have mercy on their souls.

# SUMMARY

*Everyone experiences distressing or harmful events at some point, but sometimes these experiences go beyond mere discomfort and can be genuinely damaging. There is a clear difference between temporarily painful events and traumatic ones. Trauma refers to any event that a person perceives as harmful or threatening and has a long-lasting impact on their well-being. According to the National Center for PTSD, approximately 60% of men and 50% of women experience a traumatic event at some point in their lives.*

*People can be traumatized by various sources, including but not limited to abuse, war, crime, natural disasters, discrimination, and the loss of a loved one. These experiences often trigger physical and emotional responses that can last for years after the event. The effects of trauma can influence a person's relationships, work, health, and overall outlook on life.*

*Individuals process events differently, and what may be traumatic for one person may not be for another. After experiencing a traumatic event, it is natural to feel fear and respond with the brain's "fight, flight, or freeze" mechanism. People may find themselves more anxious than before or may start avoiding certain places or people that remind them of the trauma. Those who have experienced trauma may also struggle with sleep or concentrating on tasks.*

*For most people, the fear responses and symptoms diminish over time. However, those who continue to experience these symptoms to the extent that they affect their daily functioning may be diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).*

### ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):***

*PTSD is a disorder that can develop in some individuals after they have been exposed to trauma. According to the National Center for PTSD, approximately 7-8% of people will be diagnosed with PTSD in their lifetime, which is significantly lower than the number of people who experience trauma. No one knows exactly why some people develop PTSD while others do not. Some factors that may influence the development of PTSD include:*

- Feeling terrified, helpless, or intensely fearful after a traumatic event.*
- Receiving little social support after the event.*
- Dealing with additional stress after the event.*
- Having a pre-existing mental health condition or substance use disorder, such as depression or anxiety.*

*Symptoms typically appear within three months of the traumatic event, but sometimes they may not surface for several months or even years. There are four categories of symptoms commonly seen in those diagnosed with PTSD: re-experiencing, avoidance, hyperarousal, and changes in mood and thoughts.*

*Not everyone experiences these symptoms in the same way, but for an official diagnosis of PTSD, all categories of symptoms must be present for more than a month.*

*Often, when one thinks of trauma or PTSD, military combat comes to mind. Over 14% of military personnel who served in combat operations in Iraq,*

*and more than 9% of those deployed to Afghanistan, have reported symptoms of PTSD.*

*PTSD is often accompanied by depression, substance abuse, and anxiety. Fortunately, even if trauma has long-lasting effects or if PTSD develops, there are ways people can manage the consequences of trauma to live satisfying and meaningful lives. These methods include various forms of therapy, such as specific types of trauma-focused psychotherapy, medication, group support, and more.*

## **The study Problem.**

*Adolescence receives special attention from researchers in the fields of humanities, psychology, sociology, and education due to the significant physical, psychological, and social changes that characterize this stage of life. Adolescence is often considered the "psychological birth" of a person, as it is during this phase that important psychological traits essential to an individual's mental health are formed.*

*This stage requires proper social upbringing and the integration of roles between the father, mother, and children.*

*During this period, an individual may experience various life traumas, such as health problems or the loss of a loved one. Such a loss can profoundly impact their psychological development and mental health for the rest of their life, potentially leading to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse, and, in some cases, even suicide. Therefore, the current study focuses on the following issue: "The impact of loss-related trauma on the mental health of adolescents and adults."*

## The importance of studying:

*The significance of the study is highlighted in the following points:*

- *This study addresses the topic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is considered one of the most important topics in the field of psychology and mental health today due to its widespread prevalence.*
- *It sheds light on various aspects of PTSD, including its symptoms, theories, causes, and the psychological effects it entails.*
- *This research may benefit psychological counselors and parents in treating disorders that arise from experiences of loss.*

## Objectives of the study:

*The objectives of the study are as follows:*

- *To understand the nature of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the methods of recovery from it.*
- *To explore the theories that explain PTSD.*
- *To recognize the importance of mental health and ways to strengthen it.*
- *To understand the significance of family support and social support in recovering from PTSD.*

## Study hypotheses and questions.

- ***Study Hypotheses:***

- *There are correlations between the levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the variables of gender and age.*
- *There is a relationship between the levels of PTSD and the duration of the trauma.*
- *There is a relationship between the degree of family support and social support and the speed of recovery from PTSD.*

- ***Study Questions:***

- *Is there a relationship between the levels of PTSD and the variables of gender and age?*
- *Is there a relationship between the levels of PTSD and the duration of the trauma?*
- *Is there a relationship between family support and social support and the speed of recovery from PTSD?*
- *What are the methods of recovery from trauma-related PTSD?*

## Study Approach.

The descriptive analytical method and the inductive method were used.

**The limits of the study:**

**Spatial boundaries: Mental health institutions in the Arab Republic of Egypt.**

**Time limits: 2000–2021**

## **Study plan.**

*The study plan will be organized into several chapters, sections, and a conclusion as follows:*

### ***Chapter One: The Impact of Loss Trauma on the Mental Health of Adolescents and Adults***

- ***Section One: Mental Health – Its Nature, Schools of Thought, and Influencing Factors***
  1. *The Concept of the Human Being.*
  2. *The Concept of Mental Health and Its Schools of Thought.*
  3. *Factors Influencing Mental Health.*
  4. *Facts Revealed by the World Health Organization.*
- ***Section Two: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)***
  1. *A Historical Overview of PTSD.*
  2. *Defining the Concept of PTSD.*
  3. *Symptoms of PTSD.*
  4. *Theories and Models Explaining PTSD.*
- ***Section Three: Treatment of PTSD***
  1. *Symptoms of PTSD.*
  2. *Key Features of PTSD.*
  3. *Major Schools of Thought in Treating PTSD.*

## ***Chapter Two: The Impact of PTSD on Adolescents and Adults***

- ***Section One: The Nature and Characteristics of Adolescence***
  1. *Theoretical Comparisons Explaining Adolescence.*
  2. *The Nature of Adolescence.*
  3. *The Needs of Adolescents.*
- ***Section Two: The Impact of PTSD on Adolescents***
  1. *The Impact of Trauma on Adolescents.*
  2. *The Influence of Psychological and Family Support in Overcoming the Post-Traumatic Phase.*

## ***Chapter One: The Impact of Loss Trauma on the Mental Health of Adolescents and Adults***

### ***Section One: Mental Health – Its Nature, Schools of Thought, and Influencing Factors***

#### ***First: The Concept of Human Being:***

*Before discussing mental health, it is essential to take a closer look at the personality of the human being who is intended to enjoy good mental health. To correctly understand the human being, we must carefully study the various factors that determine personality. This involves examining biological, social, and cultural factors, as the determinants of personality include hereditary factors within the individual and environmental factors shaped by social and cultural surroundings. Thus, the human entity is a blend of both material and spiritual elements, as humans are distinguished creatures whom God has endowed with intellect.*

*Humans are beings who need food, drink, clothing, and shelter, and they are also beings who think before they speak and who value truth and honesty. Human nature, as created by God, is preserved by heredity, which maintains the general characteristics of the species. There is a difference between instinct and desire; instinct refers to natural tendencies, while desire is the longing of the soul for something. Human personality encompasses animal-like qualities, such as the physical needs that must be satisfied for self-preservation and the survival of the species, and angelic qualities, reflected in the spiritual longing to know God. As stated in the Quran: "And We showed him the two ways" (Al-Balad: 10) and "We guided him to the right path, whether he be grateful or ungrateful" (Al-Insan: 3).*

*Mental health, through Islamic upbringing, aims to preserve the innate human nature in its purest form and to develop the human personality in all its dimensions from birth until death.*

***The History of Mental Health:***

*The history of mental health, specifically, dates back to the period when it became an independent field of study, separate from philosophy, with the emergence of the experimental aspect. It can be said that the Germans were pioneers in the field of experimentation, as the first organized laboratory was established by the scientist Wundt at the University of Leipzig. In England, Galton's studies on individual differences had a significant impact on mental health. In France, the focus was on psychological research in mental illnesses, while in America, there was considerable interest in psychology and mental health.*

***Second: The Concept of Mental Health and Its Schools of Thought:***

*The term "mental health" was first introduced by Adolf Meyer, who used it to refer to the development of personal and social behavior towards normalcy and the prevention of mental disorders.*

***World Health Organization's Definition:*** *Mental health is a state of physical, psychological, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease.*

***American National Association's Definition:*** *Mental health is characterized by behaviors exhibited by a person who enjoys mental well-being, a sense of self-satisfaction, respect for others, and the ability to meet life's demands.*

*Various definitions of mental health have emerged, each focusing on a specific aspect of adjustment and mental well-being. In defining the concept of mental health, scholars have used the theory of personality study and the descriptive approach, which entails achieving balance within the human body between personal demands and social expectations.*

*Psychology is the scientific study of mental health and the process of psychological adjustment, including what leads to it, what achieves it, what hinders it, and what causes psychological problems, disorders, and diseases. It also involves studying their causes, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. Psychology, in general, studies behavior in its normalcy and deviation and serves mental health science through its scientific studies by means of prevention and treatment.*

*Mental health can be defined as a relatively permanent state in which an individual is psychologically (personally, emotionally, and socially) adjusted, both with themselves and their environment. The individual experiences happiness with themselves and others, is capable of self-actualization, and utilizes their abilities and potential to the fullest extent possible. They can face life's demands, develop an integrated and well-adjusted personality, exhibit normal behavior, and possess good moral character, living in peace and harmony.*

*Mental health has two main aspects:*

- 1. **Theoretical Aspect:** This includes the study of personality, motivations, needs, causes of mental illnesses, symptoms, defense mechanisms, and psychological adjustment.*
- 2. **Practical Application:** This involves the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental illnesses.*

## ***Section Two: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)***

### ***First: A Historical Overview of PTSD:***

*Some believe that research into PTSD symptoms began after the Vietnam War, the American Civil War, or World War I. However, historical evidence shows that ancient cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia, dating back over three thousand years, describe symptoms experienced by soldiers after war that resemble PTSD symptoms. At that time, these symptoms were attributed to hauntings by spirits. Although the diagnosis of the disorder initially focused on soldiers returning from combat, the medical community now recognizes that PTSD can affect both civilians and military personnel equally.*

*By the late 19th century, doctors began linking trauma symptoms to brain function, and women experiencing severe emotional trauma were often classified as hysterical, a condition believed to originate from the uterus. This concept intertwined trauma with the notion of female weakness, suggesting that psychological stability was a matter of masculinity and moral strength. French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot later observed similar symptoms in men, discovering that the cause was traumatic events rather than biological fate, thus coining the term "traumatic hysteria."*

*With the evolution of warfare technology from aerial combat to chemical weapons, World War I introduced terrifying technologies previously unimaginable. The term "shell shock" emerged during this period, which later evolved into the concept of PTSD. Soldiers who returned from the war received rudimentary forms of psychological treatment and were often stigmatized. By World War II, psychiatrists had a deeper understanding of the impact of combat on mental health. Today, the definition of PTSD is*

*more comprehensive than ever, encompassing survivors of sexual assault, crises, surgeries, and more, linking PTSD to various aspects of past experiences.*

## **Second: Definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

### **1. Concept of PTSD:**

Abdul Moneim (2007) notes that PTSD, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, is a category of anxiety disorders. It occurs following an individual's exposure to an exceptionally distressing psychological or physical event. The condition may manifest immediately after the trauma or develop later, characterized by persistent re-experiencing of the event, avoidance of trauma-related stimuli, or numbing of general responses. The trauma specifically involves the individual experiencing, witnessing, or confronting an event that includes actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others, with an immediate reaction of intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

Re-experiencing the trauma can take various forms, including flashbacks, recurrent and intrusive memories, and distressing dreams about the event. Individuals may experience sudden feelings as if the event is happening again or relive it, which may include dissociative episodes or intense distress. They may react physiologically if exposed to internal or external cues resembling aspects of the trauma. The affected person might avoid thoughts or feelings related to the event and anything that triggers memories of it. Amnesia for significant aspects of the trauma may occur, leading to a loss of interest in important activities, feelings of detachment or estrangement from others, or a sense of an uncertain future. Individuals may also struggle with falling or staying asleep, experience fatigue, anger outbursts, difficulty concentrating, or exhibit exaggerated responses.

Rashidi and Mansour (2001) state that the World Health Organization (WHO) defines PTSD in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in a manner largely consistent with the American Psychiatric Association's definition. PTSD is described as a prolonged response to a distressing or traumatic event, which may be of a catastrophic or threatening nature. Such events include natural disasters, human-made disasters, combat, accidents, terrorism, rape, or other crimes, and often lead to severe distress and suffering.

Jacob (1999) defines PTSD as a psychological disorder classified and described by the American Psychiatric Association (1980, 1987, 1994). It arises when a person is exposed to an extremely distressing event (beyond the usual human experience), such as the horrors of war, witnessing violence and killing, torture, serious physical assault, rape, natural disasters, or severe assault on a family member. Symptoms include avoidance, numbness, intrusive images, sleep disturbances, sweating, dry mouth, fear, memory and concentration issues.

PTSD can occur at any age, including childhood, and symptoms may appear immediately after the traumatic event or after months or years. Individuals may experience deficits in functional, biological, behavioral, and psychological aspects. In children and adolescents, PTSD can endanger the child's life or physical safety, manifested through intense fear, helplessness, and horror, often triggered by events like sexual or physical abuse and car accidents.

## Conclusion.

*The success of treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), whether in adolescents, adults, or others, fundamentally depends on the following factors:*

- *The individual's ability to confront and willpower to face the disorder.*
- *Family and social support for the person exposed to the trauma.*
- *Seeking help from specialists and not being embarrassed to do so.*
- *Turning to God, engaging in religious practices, praying, and having a positive outlook on divine support.*

## Results:

- *There is a relationship between family and social support and the speed of overcoming Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).*
- *There is a relationship between the levels of PTSD and the duration of the trauma.*
- *There is a relationship between PTSD levels and variables such as age and gender, with adolescents being more susceptible to PTSD, and women being more susceptible to PTSD than men.*

## Recommendations:

- *The necessity of teaching mental health and how to handle problems and crises at all educational levels.*
- *The need to hold conferences and awareness seminars on mental health and addressing various disorders through media outlets.*
- *The importance of raising awareness about the significance of family and social support for adolescents and adults.*

## The reviewer:

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