

COUNSELLORS’ EXPERIENCES OF VICARIOUS POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH: HOW DOES CLIENT ADVERSITY AID COUNSELLORS’ PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT – A NARRATIVE REVIEW

Introduction

Vicarious post-traumatic growth (VPTG) is development individuals experience from working with people who have been affected by a traumatic event (Kang et al., 2018). Arnold et al., (2005) introduced the term VPTG, noting that practice improved when supporting clients with trauma including increased empathy and compassion. . Previous research focused on specific traumatic events or was based in specific countries. The rationale for reviewing all available research is to gain deeper understanding of how VPTG can support greater understanding of this complex and troubling phenomenon.

Methodology

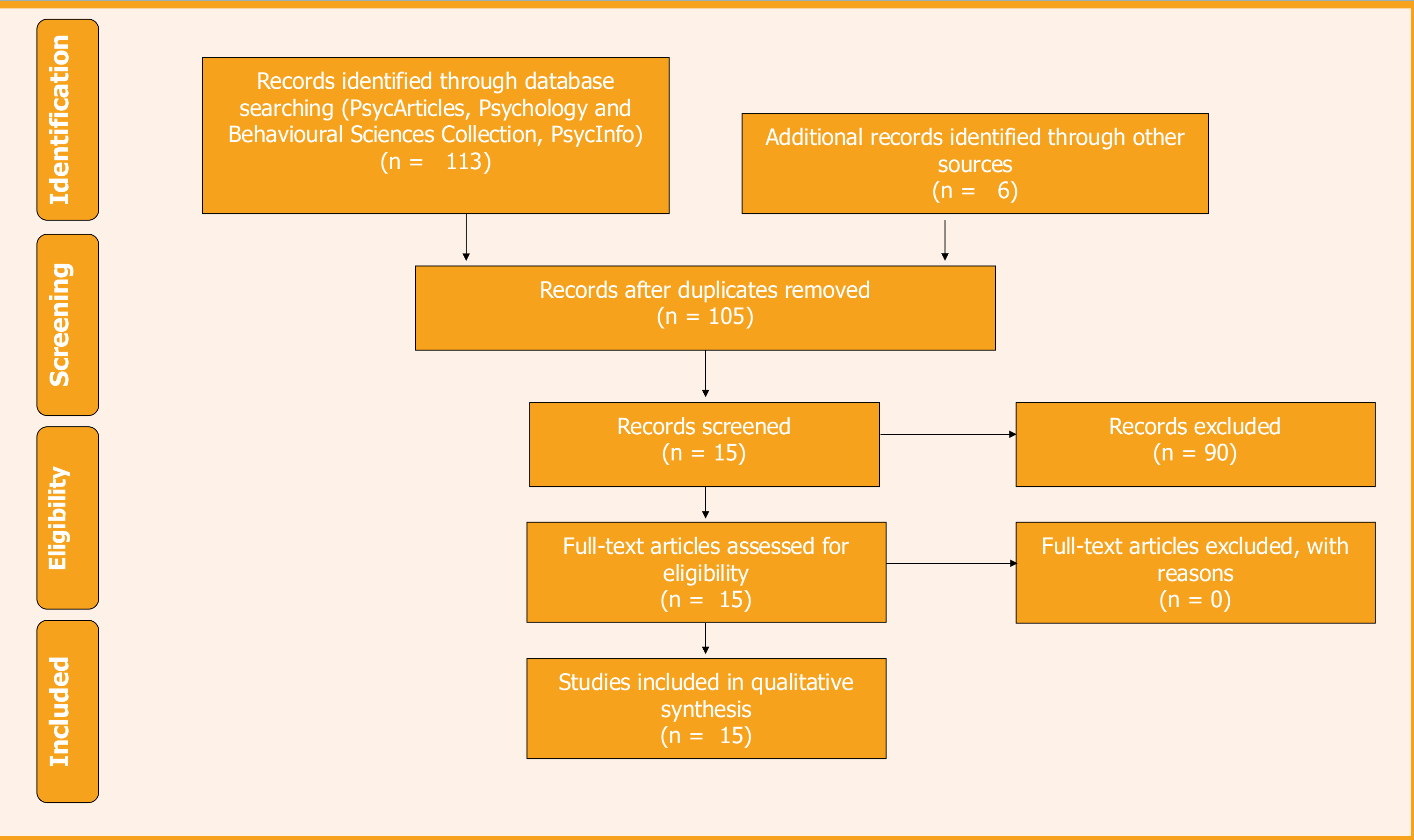
Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Date of Publication	Published from 2013	Published before 2013
Methodology	Qualitative	Quantitative, mixed methods, narrative review
Participants	Participants aged 18 years old and over.	Participants under 18 years old.
Type of source	Peer reviewed academic journals. Databases: PsycInfo, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences and PsycArticles. Internet searches. Reference lists on already cited papers.	Non-peer reviewed academic journals. PhD thesis, dissertations, and books.
Language	English	Non-English

Search Strategy

Databases Used	Search 1	Search 2	Combination of Search 1 and 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">PsycInfoPsychology and Behavioural SciencesPsycArticlesInternet search on Google ScholarReference lists from already cited papers	'Counsellors' or 'counselors' or 'therapists' or 'psychotherapists'	'Vicarious posttraumatic growth' or 'vicarious post traumatic growth' or 'vicarious post-traumatic growth' or 'vicarious resilience'	N = 119

PRISMA Flow Chart



References:

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Bartoskova, L. (2017) 'How do Trauma Therapists Experience the Effects of their Trauma Work, and are the Common Factors Leading to Post-Traumatic Growth?', *Counselling Psychology Review*, 32 (2), pp.30-45.

Cosden, M. Sanford, A. Koch, L. & Lepore, C. (2016) 'Vicarious Trauma and Vicarious Posttraumatic Growth Among Substance Abuse Treatment Providers', *Substance Abuse*, 37 (4), pp.619-624.

Cuartero, M. & Campos-Vidal, J. (2019) 'Self-Care Behaviours and their Relationship with Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue Levels among Social Workers', *Social Work in Health Care*, 58 (3), pp.274-290.

Figley, C. (2002) 'Compassion Fatigue: Psychotherapists' Chronic Lack of Self Care', *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58 (11), pp.1433-1441.

Green, B. Johnson, C. & Adams, A. (2006) 'Writing Narrative Literature Reviews for Peer-Reviewed Journals: Secrets of the Trade', *Journal of Chiropractic Medicine*, 5 (3), pp.101-117.

Henning-Pugh, M. Frith, H. & Troops, M A T. (2023) 'Exploring the Delivery of Community-Based Trauma Support by Volunteer Counsellors in a South African Context', *J Community Appl Soc Psychol*, 33, pp.1489-1505.

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Naghavi, A. & Salimi, S. (2018) 'An Autoethnography of Vicarious Trauma and Vicarious Growth in the Context of Rehabilitation Counseling', *Iran J Psychiatry Behav Sci.*, 12 (4).

Popay, J. Roberts, H. Sowden, A. Petticrew, M. Arai, L. Rodgers, M. Britten, N. Roen, K. & Duffy, S. (2006) *Guidance on the Conduct of Narrative Synthesis in Systematic Reviews: A Product from the ESRC Methods Programme*. Available at: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/fhm/dhr/chir/NSsynthesisguidanceVersion1-April2006.pdf> (Accessed on: 28th March 2024)

Tsirimokou, A. Kloess, J. & Dhinse, S. (2023) 'Vicarious Post-Traumatic Growth in Professionals Exposed to Traumayogenic Material: A Systematic Literature Review', *Trauma Violence Abuse*, 24 (3), pp.1848-1866.

Narrative Synthesis



Overview of Included Papers

The fifteen included research journals used qualitative methodologies, so we could further understand the participants lived experiences. The included papers looked at specific trauma work and from specific countries, so this study allowed a broader look into the topic.

Narrative Synthesis

A narrative approach to synthesis was used so a story could be told from different research journals on the topic of VPTG (Popay et al., 2006). Using a narrative synthesis helped to understand participants’ experiences allowing a broad perspective to be presented (Green, Johnson and Adams, 2006). The first step was to compare the papers and explore where links could be made. Then themes were made through these links.

Discussion

Findings highlight that counsellors’ self-perception and ability to understand themselves improved allowing them to work with traumatised clients (Bartoskova, 2017; Maleki & Stavrou, 2013). This is consistent with previous research which found that counsellors becoming more self-aware helped them build resilience and experience growth (Cuartero & Campos-Vidal, 2019; Figley, 2002).

Findings from this study show that VPTG seems to improve counsellors' relationships with current and future clients (Henning-Pugh, Frith & Troops, 2023; Naghavi & Salimi, 2018). Previous literature found similar results to this study, where counsellors felt more empowerment anda sense of purpose which translated into their work (Tsirimokou, Kloess & Dhinse 2023). Cosden et al., (2016) highlights that counsellors who experienced vicarious traumatisation (VT) but not experienced VPTG, were more likely to develop avoidance behaviours negatively impacting practice. This study also highlighted the close connection between VT and VPTG, and how VPTG can impact counsellors' connection with their belief systems.

Implications

- Future research: There is a lack on qualitative research on the topic of VPTG, with more research needed into a broader study exploring lived experiences, as most of the research is in one location or a specific type of trauma-informed counselling. Further research is indicated for investigation into the connection between spirituality and VPTG.
- Practice: More resources on the topic of VPTG and VT should be available for counsellors. Also, training facilities could teach students about VPTG, particularly into both prevention and identification of signs of vicarious trauma.
- Policy: Counsellors with strong connections with the organisations were less likely to experience VT.Counselling organisations may review processes for supporting staff using group discussion or supervision to reflect on this topic.

Conclusion

Limitations: There are a limited amount of qualitative research journals on this topic. There is only one author to the study so author bias might have occurred. Within the included papers, most of the participants were female.

This study has found that VPTG can have a positive impact on counsellors' development and can improve counsellors' relationships with themselves, their clients and others within their lives. VPTG can also have a positive impact on counsellors' idea of self allowing them to be more congruent with their belief systems. Whilst findings show that VPTG can have a positive impact, the process to achieving VPTG can be more difficult, with findings from this study showing that to achieve VPTG a counsellor must first experience VT in some form.