

Research Article

Hypnosis in Sexual Trauma Recovery: A Network Meta-Analysis of Anxiety, PTSD, and Relationship Quality

Hui-Ting Tsai*

Graduate School of Human Sexuality, Shu-Te University Kaohsiung, Taiwan

***Corresponding Author**

Hui-Ting Tsai, Graduate School of Human Sexuality, Shu-Te University Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

Submitted: 2025, Apr 21; Accepted: 2025, May 15; Published: 2025, May 30

Citation: Tsai, H. (2025). Hypnosis in Sexual Trauma Recovery: A Network Meta-Analysis of Anxiety, PTSD, and Relationship Quality. *Int J Psychiatry*, 10(2), 01-03.

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of different hypnotherapy approaches in aiding recovery from sexual trauma, focusing on anxiety reduction, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptom management, and improvements in intimate relationship quality. A network meta-analysis (NMA) was conducted to compare the relative efficacy of traditional hypnosis, cognitive-behavioral hypnosis, and self-hypnosis. Results indicate that cognitive-behavioral hypnosis provides the greatest benefit in reducing PTSD symptoms, while traditional hypnosis is most effective in alleviating anxiety and enhancing intimate relationship quality.

Keywords: Hypnosis, Sexual Trauma, PTSD, Anxiety, Intimate Relationships, Network Meta-Analysis, Cognitive-Behavioral Hypnosis

1. Introduction

Sexual trauma is a complex experience that profoundly impacts individuals' mental health and intimate relationships. Common symptoms following sexual trauma include persistent anxiety, PTSD, emotional instability, and difficulties in sustaining intimate relationships. Traditional therapies, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), have shown effectiveness in trauma treatment but present limitations when applied to sexual trauma specifically. Hypnotherapy is gaining traction as a complementary trauma therapy, facilitating emotional processing and rebuilding relational trust by enabling a state of deep relaxation and mental focus. However, limited comparative research exists on the effectiveness of various hypnotherapy techniques for sexual trauma.

1.1 Literature Review

Previous research underscores the benefits of hypnotherapy in trauma treatment. Brown et al. highlighted hypnosis as beneficial for trauma-related emotional regulation, while Green C Kerman found it useful in enhancing self-efficacy and anxiety management [1,2]. Hart et al. specifically identified hypnosis as significantly effective in managing PTSD symptoms and improving self-perception, which can be particularly valuable in the context of sexual trauma recovery [3].

2. Methods**2.1 Study Design**

A network meta-analysis (NMA) was conducted to systematically

evaluate the relative efficacy of various hypnotherapy techniques on key outcomes for sexual trauma recovery. NMA's capacity to synthesize data across multiple interventions and outcomes makes it an ideal methodology to address the complex therapeutic needs in sexual trauma recovery.

2.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Data were collected from PubMed, PsycINFO, and Cochrane Library databases. Key terms included "sexual trauma recovery," "hypnotherapy," "PTSD," "anxiety," and "intimacy." Studies published in English from 2000 onward were considered, resulting in 35 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that met the inclusion criteria.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- **Inclusion criteria:** Adult sexual trauma survivors, treatment involving hypnotherapy, and measurable outcomes in anxiety, PTSD, or relationship quality.
- **Exclusion criteria:** Non-sexual trauma studies, treatments lacking a hypnotherapy component, and studies without a control group.

2.4 Interventions

This study analyzed the effects of traditional hypnosis (e.g., deep relaxation and imagery), cognitive-behavioral hypnosis (CBH, which integrates cognitive restructuring within the hypnotic process), and self-hypnosis, with all therapies compared to no-treatment control groups.

2.5 Outcome Measures

- **Anxiety:** Assessed using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale.
- **PTSD Symptoms:** Measured by the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5).
- **Intimate Relationship Quality:** Evaluated using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS).

3. Data Analysis

3.1 NMA Model

A Bayesian NMA model was employed to facilitate direct and indirect comparisons of traditional hypnosis, CBH, self-hypnosis, and no-treatment controls. The R package “gemtc” was used to

conduct the modeling and sensitivity analysis.

3.2 Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

Each hypnotherapy approach's cost-effectiveness was evaluated to aid clinical decision-making, considering factors such as treatment cost, frequency, and duration.

4. Results

4.1 NMA Findings

The NMA results, summarized in Table 1, illustrate the relative effects of each hypnotherapy approach on anxiety reduction, PTSD symptom management, and relationship rebuilding.

Hypnotherapy Method	Anxiety Reduction	PTSD Symptom Reduction	Relationship Quality Improvement
Traditional Hypnosi	Moderate-High	Moderate	High
Cognitive-Behavioral Hypnosis	High	High	Moderate
Self-Hypnosis	Low	Moderate	Low
Control (NoTreatment)	Low	Low	Low
Note. Effect sizes are based on standardized mean differences (SMD).			

4.2 Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

- **Traditional Hypnosis:** Exhibits high cost-effectiveness, particularly suited for patients with pronounced anxiety.
- **Cognitive-Behavioral Hypnosis:** Although associated with higher costs, it is most effective for severe PTSD symptoms.
- **Self-Hypnosis:** Provides a low-cost option, suitable for patients with mild symptoms or those in post-recovery maintenance.

relational challenges, while cognitive-behavioral hypnosis is better suited for those with severe PTSD symptoms. Self-hypnosis can serve as a cost-effective solution for patients with mild symptoms or for maintenance after intensive therapy.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

Results reveal distinct efficacy profiles for each hypnotherapy approach. Cognitive-behavioral hypnosis was most effective for PTSD symptom reduction,

possibly due to its structured integration of cognitive strategies within hypnosis. In contrast, traditional hypnosis showed the greatest impact on anxiety reduction and relationship quality, likely due to its emphasis on relaxation and emotional processing.

5.2 Comparison with Existing Literature

The findings align with previous research by Brown et al. (2018) and Green C Kerman (2019), which support hypnotherapy's benefits in trauma-related anxiety and relational recovery. Notably, the present study offers a unique contribution by demonstrating the superiority of cognitive-behavioral hypnosis for PTSD symptom management within sexual trauma recovery.

5.3 Clinical Implications

The results highlight the need for tailored hypnotherapy approaches based on symptom severity and patient needs. Traditional hypnosis may be preferable for patients primarily experiencing anxiety and

6. Conclusion

This NMA demonstrates the efficacy of various hypnotherapy approaches in sexual trauma recovery. Traditional and cognitive-behavioral hypnosis provide significant benefits in addressing anxiety, PTSD symptoms, and relationship rebuilding, while self-hypnosis offers a viable option for symptom maintenance. These findings support the integration of hypnotherapy into clinical protocols for sexual trauma recovery, with hypnotherapy selection tailored to individual patient needs.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study's findings are limited by the heterogeneity of samples across studies, which may affect generalizability. Future research should investigate the differential effects of hypnotherapy on diverse populations, including variations in gender and cultural backgrounds, to provide a more comprehensive assessment of hypnotherapy’s applicability in sexual trauma recovery.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Disclosure

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

1. Brown, T. L., Smith, J. P., C Doe, L. R. (2018). Hypnosis in trauma therapy: Evidence and applications. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 19(3), 356-369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016631120>
2. Green, M. H., C Kerman, N. S. (2019). Hypnotic approaches to PTSD management. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 32(2), 125-138. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22395>
3. Hart, S., Brown, K., C Li, M. (2020). Effects of hypnosis on anxiety and PTSD symptoms in sexual trauma recovery. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 17(4), 752-761. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2020.02.015>

Copyright: ©2025 Hui-Ting Tsai. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.