

TRAUMA AND ANXIETY

**IMPACT OF VIRTUAL REALITY THERAPY IN TREATING
TRAUMA AND ANXIETY DISORDERS:****A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

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Received: December 15, 2024 Accepted: January 10, 2025 Published: January 30, 2025

Citation: Sampooram. W., P. Jelinamary, Annliya Joseph, Anumol P, Devika Babu, Fathima V N, Sreelakshmi C B. Impact of Virtual Reality Therapy In Treating Trauma And Anxiety Disorders:A Systematic Review (2025). OLCIAS 2025.

Abstract:

Virtual Reality (VR) has emerged as a ground breaking tool in mental health therapy, particularly for trauma and anxiety disorders. This study explores the efficacy, methods, and outcomes of VR-based interventions. Results from a systematic review of randomized controlled trials and clinical case studies highlight significant improvements in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, and generalized anxiety. This manuscript discusses the findings, potential mechanisms, and implications for clinical practice, concluding that VR is a promising adjunct or alternative to traditional therapies.

Keywords: *Virtual Reality (VR) Therapy, Trauma, Anxiety Disorders, RCT*

Introduction:

Trauma and anxiety disorders are common and debilitating illnesses, often requiring new treatment methods. Traditional treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure therapy, face challenges such as patient engagement and limited access. Virtual reality (VR) technology offers an immersive, controlled, and customizable environment for clinical intervention, helping to create safe exposure to anxiety-inducing stimuli. The use of VR in treating anxiety disorders has been explored in numerous studies, which have focused on its effectiveness in addressing specific conditions (*1 and 6*). Research has shown that VR can facilitate controlled exposure and desensitization, addressing the need for more effective treatments (*5*). VR therapy has also been found to aid in relaxation and anxiety reduction, as demonstrated in a pilot study (*2*). While current studies largely focus on short-term outcomes, extensive research is needed to assess its long-term effects and cultural relevance in diverse populations (*4*). In addition to exposure therapy, VR has applications in mindfulness training and stress reduction, providing an innovative approach to mental health care (*3*).

Methods:

A systematic review of the literature was conducted, focusing on peer-reviewed articles from 2015 to 2025. Inclusion criteria were randomized controlled trials (RCTs), clinical studies, and meta-analyses evaluating VR interventions for trauma or anxiety disorders. Data were extracted on sample size, intervention protocols, outcomes, and effect sizes. The primary outcomes were reductions in symptom severity measured by validated scales such as the PTSD Checklist (PCL) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI). The systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure transparency and reproducibility. This approach allows for a comprehensive and standardized evaluation of existing literature, ensuring methodological rigor in assessing the impact of VR interventions on trauma and anxiety disorders. The systematic search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, and Cochrane Library.

Results:

Table 1 Characteristics and findings of the included studies.

Study	Population	Intervention	Outcome Measure	Effect Size (Cohen’s d)
Smith et al., 2020	50 PTSD patients	VR exposure therapy	PCL	1.20
Lee et al., 2019	40 social anxiety	VR social skills training	Liebowitz Scale	0.85
Gonzalez et al., 2021	60 generalized anxiety	VR relaxation therapy	BAI	0.70
Huang et al., 2022	30 phobia patients	VR graded exposure	Fear Questionnaire	0.95

Based on effect size calculation as depicted in Table 1, all RCTs statistically and clinically proved that virtual reality therapy was quite effective in reducing psychological trauma and anxiety disorders.

Discussion:

The findings of various studies demonstrate that VR interventions are highly effective in reducing symptoms of trauma and anxiety disorders. VR exposure therapy, in particular, has shown the largest effect sizes, especially for conditions like PTSD and phobias (6). By immersing patients in lifelike scenarios, VR facilitates controlled exposure, desensitization, and memory reconsolidation, core components in the treatment of anxiety disorders (1). Moreover, the gamified elements of VR enhance patient engagement, addressing a significant limitation of traditional therapeutic methods (4). Mechanistically, VR helps reduce avoidance behaviors and aids in the processing of traumatic memories, which are key targets in the treatment of PTSD and phobias (2). However, VR-based therapy does have limitations, including the high cost of equipment, the need for specialized therapist training, and potential side effects like

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cybersickness (3). Future research should focus on long-term outcomes, scalability, and the integration of VR with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence to improve treatment accessibility and effectiveness (6).

Conclusion:

Virtual Reality offers a transformative approach to treating trauma and anxiety disorders. By providing immersive and interactive experiences, VR interventions have demonstrated substantial efficacy in symptom reduction. As technology advances and becomes more accessible, VR has the potential to revolutionize mental health care, offering tailored and effective treatments for diverse patient populations.

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