

Introduction

The aim of the monograph is to present the conceptualization of trauma, identify the interrelations that the research of trauma has to consider, and describe the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to studying trauma. The present text treats trauma as an event that goes beyond ordinary human experience, an event that may or may not induce psychopathological manifestations. As part of the theoretical conceptualization, it seems important to emphasize that although a significant part of the population (between 28% and 90%) encounters traumatic events during their lives (Benjet et al., 2016), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) develops only in a minority of them (Dirkzwager et al., 2006). Traumatic reactions manifested as fear, guilt, sadness, or anger can be a natural part of the course of processing a threat or coping with loss. In many cases, it is an adaptive response to extreme stress (Kleber, 2019).

However, excessive pathologizing of these reactions can lead to stigmatization and unnecessary medicalization of trauma victims (Kaplow et al., 2012). Furthermore, long-term research shows that a more common response to a traumatic event is resilience, not the development of PTSD. Most people are able to adapt even to very difficult experiences, mainly owing to their own autonomy, active participation in treatment, and support from those close to them. In the author's understanding, a key factor in successful trauma management is the search for meaning, the ability to attribute new meaning to a traumatic experience and integrate it into one's own life story. This process is particularly important in situations in which external circumstances cannot be actively controlled (Frankl, 1984; Park, 2010). The monograph offers selected findings from quantitative research (on PTSD symptoms) and qualitative research (on the traumatization of a child as a witness to domestic violence, as well as on the transgenerational transmission of trauma).

The conclusion of the monograph provides a summary of the fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to trauma research and outlines perspectives for further research through a narrative approach.