Systematic Review of Virtual Reality for the Treatment of Mental Disorders Associated with Gender-Based Violence

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Over 35% of women experience some form of gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetime, including but not limited to intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation, early/forced marriage, stalking, and harassment. Being the most common victims of GBV, women experience high first onset of mental disturbance within 1-5 years after the exposure to violence leading to perpetual disorders symbolizing 58% of the world's population. Some of the known disorders include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, anxiety, attempted suicide, eating disorder and many more. Virtual Reality (VR) has made an incredible impact in the healthcare industry particularly in the mental health domain supporting clients with psychological illnesses such as addiction, phobias, and obsession with the help of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure therapy (ET). Recent studies confirm VR as a certified tool in generating rapid and lasting improvements to mental health patients, it has now shifted gears in creating a more inclusive environment for violent offenders to empathize with abuse and trauma victims. But such studies have been limited to reducing the levels of aggression and improvement in empathy from the perspective of the abuser. Despite the encouraging success of VR applications for the treatment of varied mental disorders, no study has explored the usability of VR specifically for treatment of conditions associated with GBV victims. This paper aims to review current successes of VR applications in the psychological research space and purposes to develop a therapeutic framework for a VR model exclusively designed for the victims of GBV.

Biography

Hamida Khatri has a built reputation as a trailblazer and innovator in the realm of social justice. She is a gender-based violence expert and advocate, researcher, community activist, and a woman in tech with 15+ years of cumulative experience in the healthcare, telecommunication, advertising, education, and non-profit sectors. She is an accomplished artist and a leader with an MFA, MS, MBA, and numerous certificates in counseling, psychotherapy, and teaching. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication from The University of Texas at Dallas. She has delivered over 100+ community-driven projects, supervised 20+ successful ventures and campaigns to the consistent acclaim of clients across industries. She is passionate about building strategic partnerships and products for social good. Along the way, she has collected many accolades for her academic and leadership acumen. She is an active member of the Society for Gender Professionals and serves as a board member for Pakistani Women in Computing.