

Publication

An exploration of the nomological network of trypophobia

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 4625752

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Year 2021

Title An exploration of the nomological network of trypophobia

Journal PLoS ONE

Volume 16

Number 9

Pages / Article-Number e0257409

Mesh terms Adult; Affect; Animals; Anxiety; Behavior; Cross-Sectional Studies; Disgust; Emotions; Fear, psychology; Female; Form Perception; Humans; Male; Phobic Disorders, diagnosis, physiopathology; Sex Factors; Spiders; Surveys and Questionnaires

Background. Trypophobia is characterised by an aversion to or even revulsion for patterns of holes or visual stimuli featuring such patterns. Past research has shown that trypophobic stimuli trigger emotional and physiological reactions, but relatively little is known about the antecedents, prodromes, or simply covariates of trypophobia. Aim. The goals of this study were (a) to draw the contours of the nomological network of trypophobia by assessing the associations of symptoms of trypophobia with several constructs that were deemed relevant from past research on anxiety disorders and specific phobias, (b) to compare such associations with those found for symptoms of spider phobia and blood and injection phobia (alternative dependent variables), and (c) to investigate the main effect of gender on symptoms of trypophobia and replicate the association of gender with symptoms of spider phobia and blood and injection phobia (higher scores for women). Methods. Participants (N = 1,134, 53% men) in this cross-sectional study completed an online questionnaire assessing the constructs of interest. Results. Most assessed constructs typically associated with anxiety disorders (neuroticism, conscientiousness, anxiety sensitivity, trait anxiety, disgust sensitivity, and disgust propensity) were also associated with trypophobia in the predicted direction. All of these constructs were also associated with spider phobia and blood and injection phobia. Behavioral inhibition was negatively associated with trypophobia and spider phobia -contrary to what was expected, but positively with blood and injection phobia. We found no gender difference in trypophobia, whereas women scored higher on spider phobia and blood and injection phobia. Discussion. Although some differences were observed, the nomological network of trypophobia was largely similar to that of spider phobia and blood and injection phobia. Further studies are needed to clarify similarities and dissimilarities between trypophobia and specific phobia.

Publisher Public Library of Science

ISSN/ISBN 1932-6203

edoc-URL <https://edoc.unibas.ch/84514/>

Full Text on edoc Available;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1371/journal.pone.0257409

PubMed ID <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/34520484>

ISI-Number WOS:000707052100026

Document type (ISI) Journal Article