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The effectiveness of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing with refugees experiencing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder

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The number of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide are record high (UNHCR, 2015) and continuously increasing. The research discussed in this theory paper illustrates that the refugee and asylum-seeker groups are in greater risk of acquiring mental health disorders, in comparison to other migrant groups or the general population. This paper is concerned with the efficacy of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and other psychological interventions available to refugee populations, in the western world. Understandably, the most prevalent disorder among refugees is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite the refugee crisis, the research on psychological interventions with these populations is surprisingly limited. Nonetheless, several studies have been conducted to explore the effectiveness of different therapeutic approaches for the treatment of PTSD, a few of which have focused on traumatized refugee groups. Other predominant approaches for the treatment of psychological trauma, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), have also been taken into consideration. Those have been briefly compared against EMDR, which, in most studies, appears to be an efficient, promising, and cost-effective psychological intervention for the reduction of the symptoms of PTSD and depression. Nonetheless, the small studies and randomized controlled trials that have been conducted so far seem to have some considerable methodological limitations. Consequently, further research and mindful interpretation of the currently available data are advised.

Biography

Sofia Sykinioti has her expertise in Humanistic Counseling and is currently completing her Doctorate qualification in Counseling Psychology, at the University of Manchester. Her thesis project involves looking into different ways in which Counseling and Clinical Psychologists select to approach their clinical work with psychological trauma. Her interest in trauma, in combination with a culturally and socially sensitive approach to therapy, let her to look into the effectiveness of currently available treatments to refugees. The roles of existentialism and positive psychology have been seen as a key to this kind of therapeutic work.

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