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Biography:

Vahdet Gormez has completed his Medical training from Istanbul University in 2002 and specialist training in the field of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in Oxford Deanery, UK, in 2013. He is a Board Member for Doctors Worldwide and has been chairing the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Bezmialem Vakif University since August 2014

Prevalence and predictors of psychopathology amongst the forcefully displaced Syrian students resettled in Turkey

Objective: Around 18 million children are estimated to have been forcibly displaced for reasons ranging from armed conflict and persecution to economic pressures and natural disasters. As of March 2015 there are more than 2,700 registered Syrian refugees in Turkey and around 54% of them are those under 18 years of age. Forcibly displaced minors are known to be under risk for a wide range of mental health problems including anxiety disorders, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder. In the present study we aimed to investigate the prevalence of PTSD, depression and anxiety-related disorders and to assess the risk factors for development of psychopathology amongst the forcibly displaced young people resettled in Turkey following the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011.

Methods: A total of 218 subjects (48.6% males) aged between 9 and 15 years (mean: 11.99, SD±1.82) were recruited from two schools in Istanbul and screened using the self-report and parent forms of the UCLA PTSD Reaction Index: DSM-IV Version, Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Results: A total of 23.1% of the participants reported symptoms indicating presence psychopathology based on the SDQ total score. 14% reported severe emotional problems whilst 17.4% had conduct problems and 26.6% had severe problems in peer relationships. Prevalence of PTSD was 18.3% and that of anxiety disorders were as high as 69.0%. More than half of the subjects (56.2%) reported that someone close to them had died during the war or flee, 42.5% witnessed someone killed or exposed to violence and 25.6% reported that they had been exposed to maltreatment or torture. In terms of the risk factors for developing psychopathology; increasing age was significantly associated with anxiety-related disorders ($p < 0.001$) and general psychopathology ($p = 0.039$) but not with PTSD ($p = 0.276$). Death of a close person, seeing dead or wounded people, witnessing torture or killing during or after the war were significantly associated with PTSD, anxiety and psychopathology in general (overall $p < 0.05$). Remarkably, being able to speak Turkish or duration of stay in Istanbul since resettlement, which could be accounted for social adjustment, only showed significant association with anxiety but not with PTSD or general psychopathology. Again, self-report on satisfaction with living conditions in Istanbul had no association with psychopathology.

Conclusion: Mental health problems are highly prevalent amongst the forcibly displaced young people resettled in Istanbul and the most consistent risk factors appear to be the traumatic experiences related to the war or post-war flee period.

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