

The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdowns on Refugee Mental Health: A narrative Review

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Statement of the Problem: With over 80 million persons around the world forcibly displaced from their homes, 26.3 of whom are refugees, recent estimates indicate that the number of forced migrants has reached an all-time high (UNHCR, 2020). Already at a disadvantage, the closures of schools and key community resources aimed at combating the spread of the virus during the early stages of the pandemic contributed to further distress on the well-being of refugees. Recognizing that forced migrants are a vulnerable and underserved population and that the COVID-19 virus and the lockdowns put in place to reduce its spread severely worsened their multidimensional stressors, the authors used a qualitative narrative review with attention to the thematic analysis model to explore the impact of lockdowns on refugees' mental health by reviewing publications from April 2020 through May 2021.

Findings: The review findings are categorized under three themes: a) negative impact on mental health, b) suggested intervention approaches/strategies, and c) recommendations.

Conclusion & Significance: Refugees are a vulnerable population whose mental health problems and needs became more visible with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and the global implementation of lockdowns to contain its spread. Findings from the review show for younger school-going refugees, lockdowns exposed this age group to crippling effects on their schooling, and mental, and psychological wellbeing. Among adult refugees, there were increased cases of worry, stress, anxiety, violence, and depression. To ameliorate refugees' immediate and long-term mental health issues, a collaborative approach among various systems that serve this population could provide avenues for culturally-relevant and sensitive preventative and intervention measures to support recovery and renewal in a post-pandemic world. In view of the continuing emergence of Covid-19 variants, findings from this study are significant and raise the need for continued efforts to meet the needs of refugees.

Biography

Bellah Kiteki was Asst. Prof at School of Psychology, He completed researches on Counseling, and Family Therapy, Wheaton College, 501 College Ave, 60187-5501 Wheaton, IL USA.