



Trauma and Mental Health during the Global Pandemic

Abstract Book of the ESTSS 2021 Virtual Conference Editors: Annett Lotzin, A.A.A. Manik J. Djelantik, Marloes B. Eidhof, Anke de Haan, & Jana Kiralj

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Background: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) are important stressors, impinging the response to other psychological challenges during life. People exposed to ACE tend to be more vulnerable to develop psychiatric disorders and are more prone to adjustment difficulties when facing the extreme stress, uncertainty, and health-related risk of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Objective:** To disentangle associations between coping strategies, resilience and protective factors, mental health risk, and number and type of ACE. **Method:** An online survey launched by the ESTSS in eleven countries permits the assessment of protective and resilience factors, coping behaviour, and maladaptive adjustment amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Evaluation of mental health risk was performed using standardized instruments including measures of depression, anxiety, symptoms of adjustment disorder (ADNM-8), and posttraumatic disorder (PC-PTSD). The presence of ACE was screened in all participants who described the type and number of traumatic experiences experienced during childhood. The analysis will elucidate the presence of ACE in different individuals grouped by demographic characteristics, to foresee: 1) the most predominant variables; 2) if ACE scores relate to mental health-derived risks or resilience. **Results:** Preliminary results in ten of the participating countries showed variable frequencies of reported ACE in the different populations. The incidence of at least one ACE varies between countries. **Conclusions:** Childhood adversity may be considered as a cumulative burden and risk for mental disorders and adjustment difficulties when dealing with pandemic-related multiple challenges or may enhance protective mechanisms sustaining the wellbeing of specific subpopulations.

The role of adjustment problems and pandemic-related stressors on suicide ideation: A general population study in Lithuania and Poland amid the COVID-19 pandemic

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Background: There is a great concern among experts that multiple stressors related to the COVID-19 crisis could be associated with elevated suicide risk. **Objective:** The present study was a part of a larger pan-European study initiated by the ESTSS (Lotzin et al., 2020). Suicidal ideation was measured in two countries - Lithuania and Poland. The main aim of the current analysis was to identify factors associated with suicidal ideation in Lithuania and Poland, amid the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Method:** The total sample

consisted of 2,459 adults in both countries. 57.2% were female; the mean age was 43.45 years (SD = 15.91). The data were collected from June to August 2020. Measures for suicidal ideation (SIDAS), adjustment problems (ADNM-8), and COVID-19 related stressors were used in the current multinomial binary logistic regression analysis. **Results:** High levels of adjustment problems, loneliness, and burden due to staying more at home were significantly associated with suicide ideation in both Lithuania and Poland during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Conclusions:** Adjustment problems, loneliness, and perceived stress due to staying more at home could be important targets for suicide prevention and intervention amid the pandemic. As this is an ongoing study and the second assessment is currently in process, more results based on the analysis of the longitudinal data will be presented during the conference.

SYMPOSIUM

S2.2

Anticipating and meeting the mental health impact of COVID-19 in the UK

Chair: Talya Greene

University of Haifa, Israel

Track: Trauma and stress

This symposium presents the research and guidance developed by the COVID trauma response working group in the UK, and as part of the Global Collaboration on Traumatic Stress. This symposium will first present a mixed-methods study on barriers to effective psychosocial support for frontline UK health and social care staff during COVID-19, examining what was offered, what was actually used, and whether it was actually helpful (Greene et al.). The second presentation in this symposium uses a qualitative approach to understand the experiences of mental health professionals tasked to provide support for health and social care workers, including the potential impact of vicarious trauma (Billings et al.). The final presentation will focus on anticipating the mental health needs of survivors of serious COVID and will present guidance for establishing screen-and-treat programs.

The COVID-19 Trauma Response Working Group Guidance for healthcare workers and survivors of severe COVID-19 illness

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