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In the caring presence: How should we respond to children and young people in the hours following a sexual assault?

Caroline Whitehouse^{1,2}

¹Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia; ²LaTrobe University, Melbourne, Australia

Track: Child & Adolescent Trauma

Background: After a decade of supporting children, young people and their families in the hours following a sexual assault, and not being able to locate a model for best practise, I decided to ask children about their experience, and understand, from them, how forensic, medical and psychosocial services might best meet their needs.

Objective: Every child and young person has the right to express their views, be heard and have their views taken seriously by healthcare providers. Participants in this study gave feedback on their experience, had it recorded and used to directly improve services for children and young people.

Method: This study employs embedded ethnographic methodologies that incorporate interviews and focus groups in the approach and collection of data, and then Constructivist Grounded Theory methods in the analysis of that data.

Results & Conclusions: Whilst data collection is on-going, preliminary results suggest that a developmentally appropriate assessment; the inclusion of parents/carers in providing and teaching regulation strategies along with a trauma-informed service system and space, can help mitigate distress, help parents/carers to know how to support their children as well as gather quality information that can assist in the forensic, medical, psychological and social process going forward.

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A micro-longitudinal study on PTSD symptoms and positive memories among women reporting intimate partner violence and substance use

Ateka Contractor, Prathiba Natesan Batley, Sidonia Compton and Nicole Weiss

University of North Texas, Denton, USA

Track: Assessment & Diagnosis

Background: PTSD symptoms relate to positive memory processes and characteristics.

Objective: Using a micro-longitudinal design, we examined the trajectory of PTSD symptom count; and if vividness/accessibility of positive memories predicted the trajectory of PTSD symptom count across 30 days.

Method: Sample included 74 women who reported physical/sexual victimization in the past 30 days and reported using alcohol and/or drugs during that time (M_{age}=39.68 years; 37.80% with diagnostic PTSD). Participants completed thrice daily measures of PTSD and positive memory characteristics across 30 days. We conducted random effects longitudinal multilevel models.

Results: On average, relations of PTSD symptom count with positive memory vividness (0.19, 95% CI: 0.2, 0.35) and accessibility (0.31, 95% CI: 0.15, 0.47) were positive and significant. Unaveraged results suggested that relations between PTSD symptom count and positive memory vividness/accessibility were positive or negative across participants.

Conclusions: Relations between PTSD and positive memory vividness/accessibility may vary across trauma-exposed individuals; 2 PTSD may be characterized by an inability to retrieve positive memories easily and vividly; and PTSD interventions may benefit from targeting positive memories.

¹Faculty of Education and Psychology, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany; ²Department of Educational Psychology, Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), Germany; ³Berlin Institute for Population and Development, Berlin, Germany; ⁴School of Psychology, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK

Track: Refugee or war & conflict related traumatic stress

Background: Refugee youth are often faced with the compounding challenges of heightened exposure to traumatic events and acculturating to a new country during a developmental period when their sense of self is still forming.

Objective: Our study investigated associations between acculturation orientation and depressive and posttraumatic stress symptoms in Arabic-speaking refugee youth. Additionally, we aimed to identify other indicators of acculturation that may contribute to mental health in this specific group.

Method: A total of 101 Arabic-speaking refugee youth aged 14-20 years, who were living with their families and attending school in Germany, took part in the study. They answered questions concerning traumatic exposure and posttraumatic stress symptoms, depressive symptoms, and several indicators of acculturation, including cultural orientation, positive and negative intra- and intergroup contact, language skills and friendship networks. Associations between acculturation orientation and mental health were analysed along with associations between additional indicators of acculturation and mental health.

Results: Acculturation orientation was not significantly associated with depressive symptoms or posttraumatic stress symptoms. Regression analysis revealed that German language skills were significantly associated with lower scores of depressive symptoms and number of friends in Germany was significantly associated with lower scores of depressive and posttraumatic stress symptoms, respectively.

Conclusion: Policies that provide refugee youth with access to language classes and social activities with peers do not only enable them to actively participate in a new society but may also have a positive effect on their mental health.

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Resilience in adolescence: Trajectories and associations with maltreatment experiences and psychosocial functioning

Agniete Kairyte, Odeta Gelezelyte, Evaldas Kazlauskas, Inga Truskauskaite and Paulina Zelviene

Center for Psychotraumatology, Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania

Track: Refugee or war & conflict related traumatic stress

Background: The dynamics of resilience is a widely discussed topic, especially in the context of adverse life experiences. Yet not much is known about the dynamics of resilience in adolescence, keeping in mind that adolescence is a very dynamic developmental stage.

Objective: The longitudinal study aimed to investigate changes in resilience over three years in adolescence and explore associations between resilience trajectories, maltreatment experiences, and psychosocial functioning.

Method: The three-wave longitudinal data of 1295 adolescents at baseline ($n = 329$ at the second wave, and $n = 849$ at the third wave) from various schools in Lithuania was collected. The baseline measurement sample comprised 57.4% females and a mean age of 15.35 ($SD = 1.53$) years. Resilience, maltreatment experiences, and psychosocial functioning were measured using self-report questionnaires. The latent growth modelling approach was used to indicate resilience trajectories, and the X^2 tests were used to evaluate differences between revealed groups.

Results: Two resilience classes were revealed, indicating stable relatively high resilience (91.4%) and stable relatively low resilience (8.6%). Adolescents in the lower resilience group were more frequently exposed to at least one form of neglect, verbal abuse, physical abuse, or internet sexual abuse. Also, the lower resilience group was more often at risk for psychopathology.

Conclusions: The longitudinal study provided meaningful insights into the stability of resilience over time in adolescence and its relation to various types of child maltreatment and psychosocial functioning. Nevertheless, the study suggests resilience is a stable psychological construct. Practical implications and further investigations are discussed.

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Potentially morally injurious experiences and associated factors among Dutch UN peacekeepers: A latent class analysis