Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and vicarious trauma (VT) symptoms among mental health professionals (MHPs) working in communities exposed to high levels of trauma related to rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip

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The current study investigates posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and vicarious trauma (VT) symptoms among mental health professionals (MHPs) working in communities exposed to high levels of trauma related to rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip. The study assessed direct and vicarious traumatic exposure. The study also explored the relationship between resilience and posttraumatic growth (PTG) with MHPs' PTSD and VT symptoms. Results indicate that MHPs working in the more severely affected community of Sderot report higher objective, subjective and professional exposure as well as higher levels of PTSD and VT symptoms, compared to MHPs working in some of the other Gaza-bordering communities. Resilience had no relations with PTSD and VT in the less severely affected community of Ashdod. However, resilience had protective relations with PTSD and less in VT, in the more severely affected community of Sderot. The relation between resilience and PTG was positive in MHPs of the more severely affected community of Sderot, while negative in MHPs of the less severely affected community of Ashdod. The findings indicate that MHPs exposed to concurrent primary and vicarious trauma are at increased risk for psychological distress. However, resilience became a protective factor only in the more severely affected communities. Conclusions were drawn about interventions that aim to increase professional support; that may buffer the effects of concurrent primary and vicarious trauma exposure.

Biography
Michal Finklestein is a member of the Research Ethics Committee in Zefat Academic College.Lecturer, Tenure track, The Independent Department of Social Work, Zefat Academic College.Head of the Field Studies Unit, Zefat Academic College affiliated to Bar Ilan University, School of Social Work
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