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Stress, trauma, and PTSD among adolescents in the gaza strip

Abdelaziz Mousa Thabet
York University, Canada

Aim: This study aimed to find the most common stressors facing the adolescents in the Gaza Strip, to explore the types and severity of the traumatic experiences, and to estimate the prevalence rate of post traumatic events.

Method: The target population consisted of 319 adolescents ages 12 to 18 years with mean age of 14.97 (SD= 2.01). They were 163 boys (51.1 %) and 156 girls (48.9%). Adolescents were interviewed with Life Events Checklist, Traumatic Events Checklist, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Reaction Index.

Results: The study showed that 58.3% reported life stressors, mean stressors was 4.07. Boys significantly reported more life stressors than girls. Mean traumatic events reported was 3.7. Boys report more traumatic events than girls. The study results showed that 29.5% had partial PTSD and 23.5% had full criteria of PTSD. Total stressors and traumatic events reported by children were strongly correlated, stressors were correlated to total with PTSD, and re-experiencing, total stressors were strongly correlated with reexperiencing, numbness, hyperarousal, and dissociative symptoms. Also total traumatic events total were strongly correlated with PTSD, re-experiencing, avoidance, numbness, hyperarousal, and dissociative symptoms.

Clinical implications: In conclusion, our data support the importance of early detection and treatment of children experiencing psychological distress after war exposure, as this may prevent problems in adulthood. Further, life events contributed to persistent stress, through the erosion of social support, and also directly. Clinicians should focus on efforts to help youth manage stressors effectively, either via social support or with other strategies.

abdelaziz.thabet@gmail.com