Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression Among Children of War

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It is well established that children living in conflict areas suffer from long term mental health problems. In fact, children in zones of war are exposed to a range of traumatic events that could affect the normal cognitive, emotional and functional well-being [1]. Exposure to violence is almost always correlated with symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and depression. Previous studies have reported chronic PTSD symptoms [2,3], high comorbidity of depression [4], anxiety, fear, anger [5], decrease in attention and school performance [6-8], sleep problems [7,9,10] and somatic complaints [11]. Several underlying mechanisms have been linked to the presence and severity of PTSD symptoms include displacement, loss of property, exposure, severity, length of combat and social network support [12].

Most studies on children and war are limited to self-report data with limited focus on symptoms and culturally specific information related to risk factors and coping mechanisms. The complex association between traumatic events and mental health needs to equally investigate risk and protective factors, with careful examination of the dynamics involved in traumatic events.

Researches related to identifying specific protective mechanisms and early intervention are urgently needed to decrease long-term distress endured by children of war. There is an urgent need to increase awareness related to the impact of trauma and war on children mental health and development. Early intervention programs are necessary to curb the distress endured by children during and after war.

References

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