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Stress, trauma and post traumatic stress disorder among adolescents in the Gaza strip

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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, aged 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.

Result: 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 post-traumatic stress disorder and 23.5% had full criteria of post-traumatic stress disorder. Total stressors and traumatic events reported by children were strongly correlated, stressors were correlated to total with post-traumatic stress disorder and re-experiencing, total stressors were strongly correlated with re-experiencing, numbness, hyper arousal and dissociative symptoms. Also, total traumatic events were strongly correlated with post-traumatic stress disorder, re-experiencing, avoidance, numbness, hyper arousal and dissociative symptoms.

Conclusion: 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 effects directly. Clinicians should focus on efforts to help youth manage stressors effectively, either via social support or with other strategies.

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