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The relationship between childhood trauma and adulthood anxiety and depression among Tunisian university students

M. Turki¹, W. Hammemi², S. Ellouze¹, M. Barkallah^{1*}, I. Mannoubi¹, N. Halouani¹ and J. Aloulou¹

¹Psychiatry "B" department, Hedi Chaker university hospital and ²Higher college of health science, Sfax, Tunisia

*Corresponding author.

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Introduction: Traumatic childhood has increasingly high incidence rates and can be predictive of negative health outcomes. There is a large consensus indicating that childhood trauma is significantly involved in the development of mood disturbances in adulthood.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between retrospectively recalled childhood trauma and adulthood anxiety and depression in a sample of undergraduate university students.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among a sample of 365 university students randomly selected from 8 universities in Sfax (Tunisia). Information about childhood maltreatment, depressive and anxiety symptoms were gathered through the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form (CTQ-SF), and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) respectively. To test the hypothesis, examining the relationship between anxiety, depression, and childhood trauma, we used Spearman's correlation test. Multivariate logistic regression models were used as well.

Results: The mean age of our participants was 20.3 years. More females (68.2%) than males participated in the study. Our findings showed that the five childhood trauma subtypes (emotional abuse and neglect, physical abuse and neglect, sexual abuse) were significantly correlated with anxiety and depression symptoms severity ($p < 0.01$). Emotional abuse was the strongest risk factor for adulthood anxiety symptoms (OR=6.002, 95% CI= [3.238; 11.125]) while emotional neglect was the strongest risk factor for depressive symptoms in adulthood (OR=6.214, 95% CI= [3.428; 11.267]). Multivariate analysis revealed that, in subjects with childhood trauma, scores of anxiety symptoms were positively and highly associated with the severity of emotional abuse (adjusted B=1.438, 95% CI= [1.951; 9.092], $p=0.000$). Depression symptoms severity were as well positively correlated with severity of emotional abuse (adjusted B=0.848, 95% CI= [1.043; 5.224], $p=0.039$), and severity of emotional neglect (adjusted B=1.044, 95% CI= [1.263; 6.389], $p=0.012$).

Conclusions: This study highlighted the relevance of childhood trauma as a factor contributing to anxiety and depression in adulthood. Thus, early psychological support of victims of childhood trauma can reduce the rate of anxiety and depression among these subjects.

Disclosure of Interest: None Declared

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Acute Stress Disorder among Tunisian Population in the Palestine-Israel War

N. Messedi¹, M. Sehli^{1*}, A. samet¹, I. Chaari¹, F. charfeddine¹, L. Aribi¹ and J. Aloulou¹

¹Psychiatry B, Hedi Chaker University Hospital of Sfax, sfax, Tunisia

*Corresponding author.

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Introduction: The Gaza-Israel conflict has far-reaching consequences that extend beyond the immediate geographic confines of the conflict zone. This war certainly has repercussions on people who follow it via the media.

Objectives: To study the prevalence of acute stress disorder among Tunisian people and determinate the factors associated to it.

Methods: It was a cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical study, conducted among Tunisians. Data were collected during October and November 2023, through an anonymous online questionnaire, spread throughout social media (Facebook/Instagram), using the Google Forms® platform.

We used the the National stressful Events survey acute Stress Disorder Short scale (NSESSS) to assess the severity symptoms of acute stress disorder .

The National Stressful Events Survey Acute Stress Disorder Short Scale (NSESSS) is a 7-item patient assessment measures that assesses the severity symptoms of acute stress disorder in individuals age 18 and older following an extremely stressful event or experience.

Results: A total of 1091 participants completed the questionnaire. The participants had a mean age of 32.7 ± 9.8 years. More females (77.7%) than males (22.3%) participated in the study with a sex ratio (F/M) = 3.5. They were divorced in 2.1%. A history of psychiatric follow-up was found in 19,5% of case.

Results demonstrated that 100% of the respondents closely monitored the war, primarily relying on social media (98.6%) as their primary source of information.

According to the NSESSS ,83.4% of the participants had an acute stress disorder. The breakdown of acute stress disorder severity indicated that 29.7% experienced mild symptoms, 27.5% moderate, 21.6% severe, and 4.6% extreme symptoms.

The factors associated with high score of NSESSS were: female sex ($p=0.000$), the divorced people ($p=0.001$)and previous history of psychiatric follow-up ($p=0.000$)

Conclusions: These findings indicate a substantial impact of the Palestine-Israel conflict on the mental well-being of the Tunisian population, as evidenced by high rates of acute stress disorder.

Understanding the heightened prevalence of acute stress disorder among different demographic groups following such international conflicts is crucial for developing tailored interventions to support the mental health and well-being of affected individuals.

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