

PROSREF – Prospective study on mental health and integration of Syrian refugees

Project leader:

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Background

During the refugee crisis in 2014-2016, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees sought asylum in Germany. The aim of this study was to examine the change of the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety disorder among Syrian refugees with German residence permission, taking into account their increasing length of stay in Germany, and to uncover the change in their relationship to pre- and post-migration variables.

Methods

Substudy I:

This study formed part of a register-based follow-up study with two measurement points in Erlangen (Germany). At the first time of recruitment in 2017, 200 of the 518 Syrian refugees with residence permission living in Erlangen took part. During the second survey timeframe 1.5 years later, in 2019, 108 of the former 200 Syrian refugees participated again and formed the total sample for this follow-up study. The survey instruments included demographic data, migration-related variables and symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Essen Trauma Inventory, ETI), depression (Patient Health Questionnaire - PHQ-9) and generalized anxiety disorder (Generalized Anxiety Disorder, GAD-7).

Substudy II:

In substudy II, the perceived discrimination of Syrian refugees in Germany and its impact on mental health were investigated.

Substudy III:

In sub-study III, the presented study design is replicated in Lethbridge, Canada and serves to compare the study results internationally.

Results

Substudy I:

At the time of the first survey, 26.9% of the participants exceeded the cut-off for a clinically relevant depression diagnosis, 16.7% for an anxiety disorder and 13.9% for a PTSD diagnosis. At the second measurement point, it was 30.6% for depression, 15.7% for an anxiety disorder and 13.0% for PTSD. No significant changes between the measurement points were found for any of the disorders. In multiple linear regression analyses, higher perceived discrimination, a higher number of traumatic experiences and a shorter duration of the residence permission were shown to be the most important pre- and post-migration predictors of psychological stress independent of the time of measurement.

Substudy II:

A relatively large number of participants confronted discrimination, however in low frequency and it was generally confined to treatment with less courtesy or respect. Unfair treatment manifested mostly while searching for accommodation and in the neighborhood.

Refugees blamed for their experiences the lack of language skills in the first place, prior to religion, race, and national origins. Age, number of years of study, anxiety, and PTSD were associated with discrimination perception.

Substudy III:

Progress: Analyses

Funding

This study is supported by the Emerging Fields Initiative (EFI) Fund of the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU) and the STAEDTLER Foundation.



Publications

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