

MENTAL HEALTH OF REFUGEE CHILDREN AFTER A PROLONGED STAY IN A HIGH- INCOME COUNTRY

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Abstract

Background: Studies show a high degree of mental health problems among refugee children upon arrival in a host-country. The aim of this review is to investigate the mental health of refugees after a prolonged stay in high-income countries when arriving in the host country as children.

Method: A literary review of existing studies assessing mental health difficulties in refugee children after staying in the host-country for minimum two years.

Results: A relatively high yet variant rate of mental difficulties is evident when assessing the refugee children, however the follow-up studies shows an improvement of the mental health in comparison with their primary evaluations. Pre-migration factors such as war in home-country and post-migration factors such as long and insecure asylum-process, peer-relationships and stressful experiences, all affect the mental health outcome.

Conclusion: Refugee children seem to have a high degree of mental difficulties after a prolonged stay in high-income countries, however there is an improvement over time. Stressful post-migration experiences linked to for instance the asylum-process are negatively associated with the mental health.

Resume

Baggrund: Studier viser en høj grad af psykiske vanskeligheder blandt flygtningebørn ved ankomst til et værtsland. Formålet med oversigtsartiklen er at undersøge psykisk sundhed ved flygtninge efter et længerevarende ophold i et industriland, hvortil de ankom som barn.

Metode: En gennemgang af den eksisterende litteratur, som undersøger mentale sundhedsproblemer ved flygtningebørn, der har opholdt sig i et industriland i mindst to år.

Resultater: Der fandtes en relativ høj prævalens af psykiske vanskeligheder hos flygtningebørnene, men også en signifikant forbedring i sammenligning med tidligere vurderinger i follow-up studierne. Præ-migrationsfaktorer, som krig i hjemlandet, og post-migrations faktorer, som lang og usikker asylproces, jævnaldrende venskaber og stressfyldte oplevelser, påvirker alle udfaldet af mental sundhed.

Konklusion: Flygtningebørn ser ud til at have en høj forekomst af psykiske vanskeligheder efter et længerevarende ophold i industrilande, samtidig sker der en forbedring over tid. Stressfyldte postmigrations oplevelser, fx i forbindelse med asylprocessen, er negativt associeret med den mentale sundhed.