



Beyond Trauma Exposure: Ecological Predictors of Resilience among Syrian Refugee Children

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Abstract

While war exposure places refugee children at high risk for psychological distress, less is known about the mechanisms that promote resilience. This study applies an ecological framework to examine how pre-trauma, trauma-related, and post-trauma factors jointly predict psychosocial adjustment among Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and Jordan. A sample of 1,000 school-aged children (7–18 years) completed structured assessments of trauma exposure, behavioral and emotional difficulties, neuroticism, coping strategies, family functioning, and school environment. Despite high levels of trauma exposure, most participants demonstrated psychosocial functioning within normative ranges, indicating substantial resilience. Regression analyses revealed that trauma exposure and older age predicted poorer adjustment. However, post-trauma variables accounted for significant additional variance: maladaptive coping strategies and family conflict were associated with increased difficulties, whereas cognitive coping, emotion regulation, family cohesion, and positive school environments predicted better adjustment. Time in the host country was linked to reduced neuroticism. Findings highlight that children's outcomes are not determined by trauma alone but by modifiable ecological factors.

Interventions targeting coping skills, family relationships, and school support systems may play a critical role in promoting resilience among refugee youth.

Keywords: adjustment; coping; resilience; refugees; trauma