

Mental health of female refugees affected by intimate partner violence: A qualitative investigation

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INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 1/3 of women experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) globally (WHO, 2013)
- Mental health problems are common consequences and risk factors for IPV (Rees et al., 2011)



- In preparation for the development of an integrated mental health treatment and IPV prevention program, this qualitative study was conducted to identify and characterize the priority mental health problems affecting Congolese refugee survivors of IPV in Nyarugusu refugee camp, Tanzania

METHOD

Free Listing Interviews (n=40): Refugees working with agencies that provide gender or health-related programs in Nyarugusu refugee camp were asked to list and rank the most common problems affecting Congolese refugee survivors of IPV

Key Informant Interview (n=15): Refugees recognized by UNHCR implementing partners as experts in gender-based violence and/or mental health (e.g. religious/traditional healers, community leaders, health staff) were asked to describe the symptoms, causes and most frequently selected treatments for the top 3 priority mental health problems.

Procedures: All interviews were administered in Kiswahili by trained research staff from Nyarugusu refugee camp

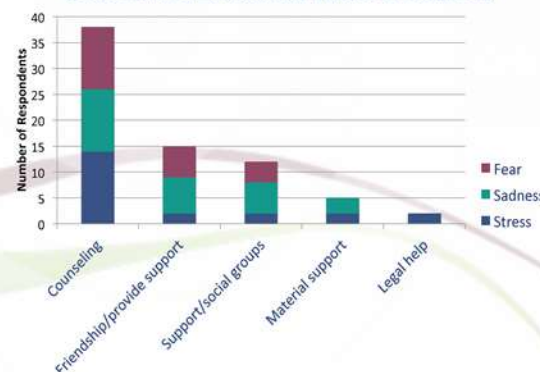
OBJECTIVE 1: IDENTIFY THE PROBLEMS AFFECTING REFUGEE WOMEN WITH A HISTORY OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



OBJECTIVE 2: DESCRIBE THE CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS OF PRIORITY MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AFFECTING REFUGEE SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM	CAUSES	SYMPTOMS
Stress (Msongo wa mawazo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPV Abandonment Divorce Husband doesn't fulfill his responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silence Unhappiness Doesn't like to talk to other people or participate in social activities
Sadness (Huzuni)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPV Abandonment Infertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crying Silence Aggressiveness
Fear (Hofu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPV Isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't like to talk to other people or participate in social activities Worrying Feels shocked/worried or trembles when sees husband

OBJECTIVE 3: EXPLORE THE TYPES OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS PROVIDED FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



DISCUSSION

- Stress, sadness and fear were the most commonly reported priority mental health problems affecting Congolese survivors of IPV in Nyarugusu refugee camp
- IPV was the most commonly reported cause for all 3 priority mental health problems followed by abandonment, divorce, a husband not fulfilling his responsibilities, infertility and isolation.
- The most commonly reported symptoms were silence (stress, sadness), unhappiness (stress), not liking to talk to other people or participate in social activities (stress, fear), aggressiveness (sadness), worry (fear), and feeling shocked, worried or trembling when a woman sees her husband (fear).
- Counseling was the most commonly endorsed strategy for treating all three priority mental health problems
 - Developing a friendship and providing individual support, recommending that a woman attend various social groups (e.g. religious, women's, development), and providing material support were other common treatment strategies.
- Results from this qualitative study were used to inform the development of an integrated mental health treatment and IPV prevention program that is being evaluated in an ongoing randomized controlled trial in Nyarugusu refugee camp

Limitations

- Research assistants had limited prior experience in qualitative data collection, but received 10 days of training prior to this qualitative study
- Potential for interviewer biases

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