THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COPING STYLES AND SEVERITY OF PTSD SYMPTOMS AMONG A CONGOLESE REFUGEE SAMPLE

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Abstract.

**Problem:**
- What is the level of PTSD among the sample (Congolese refugees), what coping strategies are employed?

**Solution:**
- There was no significant relationship between coping styles and the severity of Post Traumatic Stress disorder.
The number of urban refugees is growing rapidly and is estimated to exceed the current 6 million globally (UNHCR, 2009).

Post trauma related illnesses have been predicted by several researchers as the inevitable outcome (Fazel, wheeler, Danesh, 2005; Perera, et al, 2013; Neuner et al, 2004)

Moreover the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has been recorded to be as high as 69%-92% within refugee and victims of torture populations (Keller et al, 2006).

According to National Centre for PTSD (2014), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is characterized by eventual inability to function thereby becoming a burden to the family, society and community at large.
Marie....
Motivation and problem statement

• An extreme amount of stress experienced by refugees in variant contexts could amount to PTSD. (Hobfoll et al. 2007)

• Traumatic events are able to destroy one’s fundamental assumptions of the world’s goodwill and the worthiness of self, giving rise to fear and anxiety that may in turn result in functional and social impairment. (Hobfoll et al, 2007; Kolassa et al, 2010, Konvisser, 2013; Perera et al, 2013; Hutchinson & Dorsett 2012).
Motivation and problem statement

• Traumatic levels can be reached under various conditions, including but not limited to, decline of community functionality due to destruction of resources, especially in the presence of dwindling economic and psychosocial resources, the loss of what has been called attachment bonds due to massive destructions, loss of safety due to loss of territory and the loss of a sense of justice and meaning (Hobfoll et al. 2007).

• This study examined how coping strategies moderate scores of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms among the Congolese Refugees
Related works

• The importance of coping styles was emphasized in a study carried out in refugee camps among 103 Palestinian adults. This study indicated that various coping styles may have contributed to differences in psychological symptom severity. The study showed that emotion-focused coping after trauma was linked to high levels of distress but several months after the distressful event, problem focused coping was linked to low levels of distress (Hooberman, et al, 2010).
METHOD

- This quantitative study, utilized a cross-sectional design.
- This study was carried out in Kawangware at a community center.
- The population - Congolese refugees in Nairobi, 9,700 as of January 2015 and are predicted to grow to 11,610 by December 2015 (UNHCR, 2015).
- A simple random technique of sampling was utilized for this study.
- The sample included 20 English speaking adults only between ages 18-55. 16 were male and 4 were women.
- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21,
Tools used:

- 16-item Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) test-retest reliability, $r = 0.89$ <16 items>
- Coping Strategies Inventory- Short Form (CSI-SF), internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.90$)
  - The inventory has a total of 32 items, generating two inclusive coping factors: Engagement and Disengagement and
Results and brief discussion.

- 80% of this refugee sample met the criteria for high PTSD symptoms according to the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire.
- Moreover 70% of the males and 10% of the females showed high PTSD.
- In total, 50% of the participants utilized both engagement and disengagement coping styles: Females:

## Engagement and disengagement

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<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Pearson r</th>
<th>Significance Level 0.05</th>
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<td>Problem Focused Engagement</td>
<td>-.164</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion Focused Engagement</td>
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<td>.287</td>
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<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
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<th>Significance Level 0.05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem Focused Disengagement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion Focused Disengagement</td>
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No significance between low or High PTSD and Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>low levels of PTSD and engagement</th>
<th>high levels of PTSD and engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson r</td>
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<td>.258</td>
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<td>Significance Level p</td>
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Summary

• Study indicates that neither engagement nor disengagement moderate the severity of PTSD exclusively.
• Future studies are encouraged to work with larger sample groups so as to create a bigger base for variable interaction.
• The disparities in gender can be further investigated.
• Comparing variables such as personality type, educational background may show how PTSD severity is moderated. A comparison of various communities.
• Longitudinal studies may show how coping styles may be adaptable from one environment to another.
Experiences

• Working with community representatives
• The importance of Ethics.
• Complicated terminology in the tool.
• Female sample was small

Achievements

• Engagement and disengagement coping strategies are used by males and females.
• This research can serve as a pilot study for longitudinal studies.