

What are the Characteristics of Torture Victims in Recently Arrived Refugees? A Cross-sectional Study of Newly Arrived Refugees in Aarhus

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Abstract:

Background: The healthcare systems of countries receiving refugees face great challenges in treating torture victims with complex health conditions. It is essential for the rehabilitation of torture survivors that their traumas are early recognized. Certain characteristics might be overrepresented in torture victims among recently-arrived refugees. The aim of this study was to investigate the i) prevalence of torture exposure, ii) association between demographic characteristics and exposure to torture iii) association between PTSD and exposure to torture among recently-arrived refugees.

Methods: When granted permanent residence status, all refugees in the Municipality of Aarhus are offered a voluntary general health assessment performed by doctors. Data was extracted retrospectively from health assessments of refugees arriving in Aarhus between 2017-2019, and 208 cases were included in the analysis.

Results: The prevalence of torture was 13.9%. A total of 11.5% male and 2.4% female cases, respectively had been subjected to torture. Of the tortured refugees, 82.8% were male. Associations were found between torture exposure and respectively male gender (Chi² p-value < 0.000), origin in South-eastern Asia (p-value 0.019) and diagnosis of PTSD (Chi² p-value < 0.000).

Conclusion: Torture is frequent among refugees, and especially men are at risk. Diagnosis of PTSD is associated with torture.

Table 1: Demographics for the study population with information on torture. Chi2 analysis was conducted for each country

Region of origin	Country of origin	n(%)	Median age (range), years	%female	Exposed to torture, n(%)	Chi2 p-value
Western Asia		102 (49,0%)	36 (18-70)	59,8	10 (9,8%)	0,09098
	Iraq	8 (3,8%)	24,8 (21,8-32,2)	62,5	1 (12,5%)	0,64246
	Jordan	1 (0,5%)	65,6 (65,6)	0,0	0 (0,0%)	0,68660
	Lebanon	4 (1,9%)	38,6 (21,8-52,4)	100,0	0 (0,0%)	0,41630
	State of Palestine	3 (1,4%)	46,3 (26,2-52,7)	33,3	1 (33,3%)	0,32873
	Syrian Arab Republic	86 (41,3%)	37,1 (18-70)	59,3	8 (9,3%)	0,10480
Southern Asia		73 (35,1%)	33,5 (18,2-63,7)	39,7	14 (19,2%)	0,10893
	Afghanistan	20 (9,6%)	33,5 (19,8-61,4)	45,0	5 (25,0%)	0,13319
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	53 (25,5%)	33,5 (18,2-63,7)	37,7	9 (17,0%)	0,45939
South-eastern Asia		2 (1,0%)	30,4 (24,5-36,3)	0,0	2 (100%)	0,00042
	Myanmar	2 (1,0%)	30,4 (24,5-36,3)	0,0	2 (100%)	0,00042
Northern Africa		3 (1,4%)	40,5 (37,8-48,4)	66,7	0 (0,0%)	0,48253
	Algeria	1 (0,5%)	48,4 (48,4)	100,0	0 (0,0%)	0,68660
	Egypt	1 (0,5%)	40,5 (40,5)	0,0	0 (0,0%)	0,68660
	Morocco	1 (0,5%)	37,8 (37,8)	100,0	0 (0,0%)	0,68660
Eastern Africa		25 (12,0%)	29,7 (18,5-65,6)	64,0	3 (12,0%)	0,76501
	Eritrea	16 (7,7%)	32,6 (18,5-65,6)	62,5	3 (18,8%)	0,56337
	Ethiopia	1 (0,5%)	24,1 (24,1)	100,0	0 (0,0%)	0,68660
	Somalia	8 (3,8%)	26,2 (24,3-40,9)	62,5	0 (0,0%)	0,24564
Eastern Europe		2 (1,0%)	36,4 (34,6-38,1)	50,0	0 (0,0%)	0,56733
	Russian Federation	2 (1,0%)	36,4 (34,6-38,1)	50,0	0 (0,0%)	0,56733
Unknown origin		1 (0,5%)	59,1 (59,1)	100,0	0 (0,0%)	
Total		208		52,9	29 (13,9%)	

Figure 2: Numbers (*n*) of tortured men and women and men and women in total by region of origin.

