

Combination of Micro and Macro Practice: promoting well being of asylum seekers young children during the covid-19 pandemic

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Thematic importance: The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the risk of the appearance of post-traumatic symptoms and mental health problems in young children, especially to those who were already at risk. One of the most vulnerable groups in Israel is the population of asylum seekers and undocumented families. This population lives in poverty and crowded housing and was not entitled to state income support during the lockdowns. The primary source of support available to these children depended on the goodwill of each municipality's local services. The pandemic has called into question the ability of the local educational staff to provide a supportive framework for families and children in general and asylum seekers in particular.

Introduction and objectives: this explorative study aimed to collect preliminary data on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on preschool children, teachers, and parents, right after their return to their educational setting, in the asylum seekers in particular. We were also interested in the ability of the community to serve as a protective factor for these children.

Method: We conducted an explorative qualitative study. The sample evolved in a snowball method and included 10 educational supervisors, 15 teachers, and 10 mothers. We were using focus group interviews and in-depth semi-constructed interviews. Overall we gathered information about more than 100 children from different educational settings. We asked the interviewees about their own experiences during the lockdowns,

changes in children's behavior manifested in the educational setting, and the sources of support that were available to them.

Results: The findings of the study centered around four themes:

1. Children displayed post-traumatic symptoms, regression in regulating emotions and behavior, and setbacks in developmental milestones.
2. Mothers and teachers also displayed traumatic symptoms and impairment in functioning as a protective shield for the children.
3. The Collapse of the state social support system added to the risk factors.
4. Local initiatives of educators, supervisors, and social workers in the community services can provide meaningful support.

Conclusions and implications:

In the reality of mass trauma, it is crucial to combine micro and macro practice. Strengthening community initiatives is essential as a significant source of resilience, tailoring local solutions to help the children. Moreover, This body of knowledge generated in local initiatives is an indispensable contribution to future community-level intervention. There is a need to develop programs for the therapeutic and educational staff in trauma-informed practice and broaden the lens of intervention possibilities at the practice level. In addition, the research highlights the need to invest in community services and programs that are compatible with and sensitive to the asylum seekers' families.

Recommendation

There is already an extensive body of knowledge about intervention in the practice of the micro-level. But not enough is known yet about intervention on the macro-level. It is recommended to conduct a further in-depth study, particularly in the local children's education system, in ongoing traumatic events in this specific population.

