

## **FEATURES OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF DISPLACED CHILDREN**

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In recent years, the number of forcibly displaced persons has risen worldwide, with approximately 40% being children and adolescents. Most of them are hosted in low- and middle-income countries [1]. Ukraine is one of these countries. Many individuals meet the criteria for mental health issues, which can also be exacerbated by a number of risk factors, including low socioeconomic status, displacement, and stressors linked to conflicts in their country or region of origin [1]. The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East have led to a substantial influx of Syrian refugees, exposing them to severe traumatic experiences and contributing to a range of mental health issues [2]. Findings show that childhood trauma exposure is common in this setting and associated with worse mental health problems among young boys and girls [3]. Children with neurodevelopmental disorders are particularly sensitive. Emerging evidence suggests heightened vulnerability of autistic children to the psychological consequences of traumatic events [4]. Moreover, it has been shown that traumatized children and adolescents who have fled from war and conflict zones represent a high-risk group, as they suffer from psychiatric symptoms to an above-average extent and on several levels: somatic, psychological, psychosomatic, and psychosocial [5].

In February 2022, Ukraine suffered a devastating assault by Russia, leading to destruction, casualties, and mass displacement. Among those displaced were over 1.5 million children. Forced displacement exposes children to a heightened risk of mental health issues [6]. The findings revealed that the war is seriously impacting

the life and the health of Ukrainian children, resulting in worse physical and mental health outcomes and perpetrating a deprived situation [7]. Even children who are not directly affected by the war can also display difficulties in mental functioning due to the subsequent refugee crisis [8]. So, the Russia-Ukraine War is one of the great challenges of our time on mental health in adolescents [9].

Forced displacement exposes children to an increased risk of mental health problems. It has been proven that Ukrainian child refugees frequently experience psychological distress, even if they do not meet the formal diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They often exhibit other distress symptoms, primarily internalizing problems, which can be challenging to detect [6]. Research suggests that stress has immediate and long-term effects on attention and memory [10]. In turn, both theoretical and empirical studies suggest that negative cognitive biases significantly influence the onset and persistence of PTSD symptoms [11].

We examined 50 children of both sexes aged 7 to 15 years. Depending on the presence or absence of the factor of forced displacement due to the war, the children were divided into groups: the 1st (control) group – did not experience displacement, the 2nd (main) group – displaced children. Observations revealed that the psychotesting indicators in children depended on the presence or absence of the factor of forced displacement. Thus, in the 2nd (main) group of children who were displaced, the deviation coefficient from the optimal level of figure recognition was higher than in the 1st (control) group of children who did not change their place of residence. The «Correction Test» (by Bourdon) revealed slower attention switching in the 2nd group of children than in the 1st group. The 2nd group of children made more mistakes when working with the red-black table, unlike the control group children. The time for attention switching was longer in the 2nd group of children than in the 1st group. The obtained results are consistent with the literature data on the negative impact of stress factors on children's mental health [1-11].

Modern scientific sources emphasize the need for psychotherapeutic intervention for refugees, especially for children [1-3]. It is noted that there is a clear need for psychotherapeutic interventions here that goes beyond purely verbal conversational therapy and provides a holistic concept [5].

Therefore, studying the consequences of the negative impact of war on a child's cognitive activity and finding ways of psychocorrection can be quite useful for the practical work of a psychologist.

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