

**A study on the experience of  
traumatized women in relation with  
their marital, parental and sexual life  
in Kosovo**

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- ▶ In the recent past Kosovars have experienced a series of major traumatic events, including massive displacement, violence, and a loss of close relatives or friends.
- ▶ Around 60 percent of Kosovar population has experienced forceful displacement before, during and after the conflict (1998-1999). More than ten thousand have been killed while up to now more than 500 mass graves have been recovered.
- ▶ Moreover, during 1990's more than 500.000 have experienced detainment and ill-treatment from the Serbian police.

- ▶ In a post war area the situation of women and girls seems to be at a greater risk of physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Many women have been raped or experienced other forms of tortures and violence.

- ▶ The last comprehensive studies of trauma were conducted in Kosovo during 1999 and 2000, by the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (7).
- ▶ It was found that 17.1% of the Kosovo Albanian population aged 15 and above showed symptoms consistent with PTSD.
- ▶ Surveys in 2000 found an increase to 25% - a result that could be consistent with the notion that the symptoms of PTSD could require months to emerge.
- ▶ With an estimated population of 1,900,000 PTSD could affect about 475,000 persons in Kosovo.
- ▶ According to the same study, 80% of the population had been subjected to four or more traumatic events.
- ▶ About 50% had been tortured or subjected to other assaults.
- ▶ According to the same study the prevalence of the psychological problems as somatic symptoms, anxiety associated with war trauma, social dysfunction and depression is as high as 43%.
- ▶ In addition, anger and aggression can cause job, marital and sexual relationship problems

- ▶ The annual report 2003 of Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims showed that 60% of traumatized victims treated in this centre were women with PTSD and other symptoms of trauma.
- ▶ All these factors have lead Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims to continue its work on *improving the overall social and psychological functioning of the torture and trauma victims and their families in most affected areas throughout Kosovo.*

- ***HYPOTHESIS***

***Women with high traumatic experiences will indicate higher family violence, and more self-perceived difficulties with parenting and less marital satisfaction compared to women with lower traumatic experiences.***

## AIM OF THE STUDY:

- ▶ To compare the experience of high traumatized women in relation to their marital, parental and sexual life with the experience of low traumatized women.

## OBJECTIVE:

- ▶ To collect questionnaires from high traumatized and low traumatized women on the quality of marital relationship (e.g. satisfaction with marriage, presence of physical and/or psychological abuse and/or sexual abuse);
- ▶ To assess the self-perceived ability and their role as parents (parenting style, tendency for child abuse);
- ▶ To determine the satisfaction of respondents regarding their sexual life (current and previous relationship, satisfaction, behaviours).

# METHODOLOGY

## STUDY POPULATION

- ▶ The study will be conducted with women who experienced major traumatic events during the war (1998-1999) and those classified as presenting a low trauma experience according to HTQ.
- ▶ Comparative study of two conditions regarding the severity of traumatic experience will be conducted, in order to determine whether family violence, marital dissatisfaction, partying style and sexual dissatisfaction is higher within families who went through major traumatic experiences in the war in Kosovo compared with women with a low trauma experience.

## SAMPLE SIZE

- ▶ 50 women with high traumatic experience - 10 for each region of Kosovo - according to HTQ.
- ▶ 50 women with low traumatic experience - 10 for each region of Kosovo.
- ▶ The subjects will be identified by KRCT workers in the field offices primarily from the five regions of Kosovo.

# Controlling variables:

- ▶ The two samples will be matched in the indicators on:
  - economic wellbeing
  - urban setting
  - education
  - treatment vs. no treatment
  - age
- ▶ Albanian ethnic group

# INSTRUMENTS

## PHASE 1

- ▶ **Clinical Interviews based on traumatic diagnosis scales - Harvard Trauma Questionnaire checklist – HTQ.**
- ▶ **HTQ is the clinical instrument that should be administered by health care workers.**
- ▶ **This instrument is designed to obtain information about:**
  - **Trauma events experienced by survivors;**
  - **Assess the physical, psychological and social sequelae;**
  - **Measure symptoms associated with diagnostic criteria for Post traumatic disorder and Major Depression – as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of the American Psychiatrist Association.**

- ▶ Based on the responses it will be decided if the survivor is:
  - *Checklist positive*
  - *Checklist negative*
- ▶ according to the scores of severity of trauma and symptoms found by the clinical assessment.

## Checklist scores:

For the response to each item assign the following number:

- ▶ 1.= Not at all
- ▶ 2.= A little
- ▶ 3.= Quit a bit
- ▶ 4.= Extremely

1. Add up to items 1- 40 and divide to by 40 to get the total score:

▶ ***PTSD score*** = 
$$\frac{\text{item1}+\text{item2}+\dots\text{item40}}{40}$$

▶ ***PTSD score >2.5 = Checklist positive - PTSD***

2. Add up the item 11-25 and divide by 15 to get the depression score:

▶ ***Depression score*** = 
$$\frac{\text{item11}+\text{item12}+\dots\text{item25}}{15}$$

▶ ***Depression score >1.75 = Checklist positive – major Depression***

## PHASE 2

- ▶ Self administered questionnaire on marital satisfaction inventory revised – MSI-R(13) *Marital satisfaction in conflict in Latin North America Interethnic couples in Canada/Snyder-1997*
- ▶ The MSI-R can be administered and hand scored in just 25 minutes
- ▶ Each woman responds to 150 True-False items covering the following dimensions of marital interaction

- ▶ Affective Communication
- ▶ Dissatisfaction With Children
- ▶ Role Orientation
- ▶ Disagreement About Finances
- ▶ Problem-Solving Communication
- ▶ Conflict Over Child Rearing
- ▶ Aggression
- ▶ Sexual Dissatisfaction
- ▶ Family History of Distress
- ▶ Global Distress
- ▶ Time Together

# INCLUSION / EXCLUSION

## ► *Inclusion criteria:*

- Woman exposure to war-related traumatic experiences during the last war in Kosovo
- Primary diagnosis of post trauma disorder (HTQ) by a trained psychologist
- Age 25-45
- Married at least five years
- Albanian ethnic group

► **Exclusion criteria:**

- Severe organic disease
- Psychological/behavioral disorder
- Schizophrenia (F2) and schizoaffective disorder (F25)
- No psychopharmacological treatment
- Actual suicide risk (evaluated by trained psychologist) or having had an attempted suicide
- Not having undergone a psychological treatment after traumatic event

## Duration

- ▶ Preparation including training of assessors will need 3 months. Time for patient recruitment will be 3 months for the first phase and 3 months for the second phase. Final statistic evaluation requires 3 additional months. Total study duration: 12 month.

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ Clients will be informed about study design and procedure; they will give informed consent and can withdraw at any point without any disadvantage. The Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims will be responsible for handling serious events and providing psychological and medical care for the trial participants.

# OUTCOME

- ▶ The practical aim of this study is to collect information on family violence (against spouse and children), marital satisfaction and sexual violence among high traumatic and low traumatic women's groups.
- ▶ The outcome of the research will be used to improve intervention methods for addressing multidisciplinary approaches in psychological and sexual wellbeing of traumatized women attending the centre and their families.

## ▶ TRIAL SITES

- Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims
- University of Prishtina, Department of Psychology
- Family Medicine Doctors from 5 Health District areas.

▶ THANK YOU !

