TRAUMA OF WAR AND EMOTIONAL REACTIONS BY INTERNALLY DISPLACED AND UN-DISPLACED CHILDREN

Ruqaia Gul[1] & Erum Irshad[2]

[1]Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan
[2]Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Aim of this research was to investigate the emotional reactions of children who went through the trauma of war by using Human Figure Drawing (HFD) as projective test. The hypothesis of the study was that Internally Displaced (IDP) children will show greater number of emotional indicators as compared to un-displaced children on HFD test also IDP children will show greater number of aggressive emotional indicators as compared to un-displaced children. The population of research included IDP and non IDP children so as to draw comparative analysis of their emotional reactions. Data was collected two to three years after their displacement. Sample comprised of 192 IDP and 90 un-displaced children. The results support the hypothesis. This projective technique is useful because childrens' vocal abilities are not well developed.

Keywords: *War, Internally Displaced & Un-displaced Children, Emotional Reactions*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings reflect their emotions with their facial expressions but sometimes it's difficult for children to reveal their feelings. Therefore, recent clinicians focus on combination of verbal and nonverbal techniques. Children's verbal skills are not well developed it is difficult for them to express their feelings of traumatic events. Creative activities such as art, drama etc proved helpful to the children to give voice to their inner world, damaged because of unexpected and sudden trauma (Malchiodi, 2008). Evidence suggests that the storage of traumatic memories in the human brain, weaken verbalization (Harris, 2009). To deal with it HFD test was developed by Koppitz (1968). He found that children who are normal and those who have variety of emotional disorders have differences in their HFD's based on omissions and additions in HFD's of these two groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Koppitz (1984) believes that child's inner world can be accessed easily through drawings. HFDs can be used to study emotional or psychological problems of children. As children are not typically vocal about their emotional states these drawings can be used to determine their emotional reactions to traumatic situations. It is claimed that child's level of development and quality of their interpersonal relationship are reflected in their HFDs. For

instance, these drawings reflect their attitudes towards themselves and towards their significant others. These drawings may also tell about deep fears and anxieties that may concern the child, consciously or unconsciously, at that time (Koppitz, 1968).

There is a critic on HFD test that it needs to be proved that the cognitive differences among children do not affect the result. Gigi (2015) conducted a survey and found that drawing test is influenced to a certain degree by the cognitive difference among children but the results can't be generalized because of small sample size. However there are number of other studies that show HFD test effectiveness in assessing children psychological state. Children between six to twelve years can be helped through HFD test by providing them a useful way of communication.

It also efficiently helps in differentiating and identification of children who are in need of and who do not need further mental health assessments (Tielsch & Allen, 2005). Catte, and Cox (1999) studied HFD's of emotionally disturbed and well-adjusted boys. Boys in both the groups had the same chronological and mental age. Results showed that emotionally disturbed boys include significantly more emotional indicators than their comparison groups in their HFD's. In different cultures HFD test was administered and it proved as a helpful tool to assess overall adjustment and to analyse whether a more thorough assessment should be used or not (Tielsch & Allen, 2005).

This study was mainly designed to investigate emotional reactions especially aggressive reactions of children to the traumatic experience of war in KP, Pakisan. In light of the current literature review it was hypothesized that internally displaced children will show greater number of emotional indicators as compared to un-displaced children on HFD test. It was also hypothesized that internally displaced children will show greater number of emotional indicators of aggression as compare to un-displaced children on HFD test.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Population

This study was conducted as part of a large study. Population in this study comprised of war affected internally displaced children from Bara, Mommand Agency and Swat, who were living in Jalozi camp, and un-displaced children who were living in their own homes in Peshawar. Defining the total number of IDP's was difficult because many families were moving around frequently.

They were used to visit their relatives in other cities and then come back to the camps. Also some IDP's were away for earning in other areas but they maintained their place in camp.

Sample

In this study sample comprised of (*N*=282) subjects, including children from internally displaced camps (*n*=192) and un-displaced children (*n*=90) ages between 10 to 15 years. In IDP camps children were accessed through their schools set up by Non-Government Organizations. Un-displaced children were selected randomly from schools located in different areas of Peshawar.

Materials

The material included Human Figure Drawing test (Koppitz, 1969). This test was used as its instructions are simple and the use of language was minimum to administer it, therefore it can be easily translated in Pushto, Urdu or any other regional language of Pakistan. To administer this test a white paper ($8^{1/2}$ x 11 inches), pencil and eraser were used. HFD test has become one of the most extensively and commonly used psychological test with children. The former exponent of the projective technique was Macover, 1949. In this study HFD was used to assess emotional indicators among internally displaced and un-displaced children. Reported reliability coefficient is 0.60 (Koppitz, 1969).

Procedure

Schools for IDP children were situated in their camps. After obtaining formal permission from head of the schools and consent from parents semi structured interview was conducted with all the subjects to develop rapport and to collect information about history, intensity and duration of the problem. HFD test was administered on children in groups by using a white paper $8^{1/2}$ x 11 inches, pencil and eraser. Standard instructions given by Koppitz (1969) as "On this piece of paper I would like you to draw a whole person. It can be any kind of a person you want to draw, just make sure that it is a whole person and not a stick figure or a cartoon figure" were communicated to the children.

These instructions were communicated in simple Pushto language as children were able to understand it. Later it was ensured that they understood the instructions and draw a whole person. This procedure was repeated with undisplaced children. They were accessed at their schools located at different areas of Peshawar. The drawings were than analysed to find out the frequency of emotional indicators and the frequency of aggressive emotional indicators among internally displaced and undisplaced children.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table 1 Cross tabulation across IDP's and un-displaced children on emotional indicators

Indicators	IDP's (*n*=192)	Un-displaced (*n*=90)	*x2*
0	16(8.3%)	24(26.7%)	
1	32(16.7%)	40(44.4%)	
2	72(37.5%)	20(22.2%)	
3	43(22.4%)	6(6.7%)	59.74**
4	22(11.5%)	0(.0%)	
5	5(2.6%)	0(.0%)	
6	2(1.0%)	0(.0%)	
Total	100	100	

Table 1 shows that internally displaced children shows greater number of emotional indicators on HFD test than un-displaced children. $p<.01$ shows high level of statistical significance.

This table shows that 24 children i.e. 26.7% of the sample from un-displaced group showed no emotional indicator on HFD test. 40 children i.e. 44.4% showed 1 emotional indicator 20 children i.e. 22.2 % showed 2 emotional indicators and 6 children i.e. 6.7% of the sample showed 3 emotional indicators on HFD test. While only 16 children i.e. 8.3% of the sample of internally displaced group showed no emotional indicator on HFD test. 32 children i.e. 16.7% showed 1 emotional indicator, 72 children i.e. 37.5 % of the sample showed 2 emotional indicator, 43 children i.e. 22.4% of the sample showed 3 emotional indicators, 22 children that is 11.5% of the sample showed 4 emotional indicators, 5 children i.e. 2.6 % showed 5 emotional indicators and 2 children i.e. 1.0% of the sample of internally displaced children showed 6 emotional indicators on HFD test.

Table 2 Cross tabulation IDP's on aggressive Emotional indicators of HFD test

Indicators	IDP's (*n*=192)	Un-displaced (*n*=90)	*x2*
0	118(62%)	75(83%)	
1	62(32%)	13(15%)	13.62**
2	12(6%)	2(2%)	
Total	100	100	

Table 2 shows that internally displaced children showed more aggressive emotional indicators than un-displaced children. As $p<.01$ it shows high levels of statistical significance.

DISCUSSION

Internally displaced children face more difficulties and experience more traumatic situations than un-displaced children. It's expected that their emotional reactions to such situations will be high. As children cannot express their emotions properly, they feel frustrated, anxious and at risk of developing further psychological complications. This is confirmed by evaluations of their drawings in this study because internally displaced children showed greater number of emotional indicators than un-displaced children (table 1) which supported the hypothesis i.e. "Internally displaced children will show greater number of emotional indicators as compared to un-displaced children on HFD test".

The feelings of terror and helplessness often lead to aggression and guilt because they have no control over their situation. Such emotions make them vulnerable to emotional reactions like aggression, which is confirmed in the present study because. These results support the second hypothesis i.e. "Internally displaced children will show greater number of emotional indicators of aggression as compared to un-displaced children on HFD test" (table 2). Internally displaced children showed greater number of aggressive emotional indicators on HFD test because drawings serve as medium of catharsis for children as they can't verbalize their feelings. This study supports idea that children's painful experiences of traumatic war related situation can be assessed in HFD's as Malchiodi (2001) stated that "drawing is a natural language for children and especially for the child who has been traumatized or experienced significant loss".

CONCLUSION

War effected children of Pakistan faced the unexpected terror and brutality. They faced injuries, lifelong disabilities and death of loved ones. They faced separation from their family and parents. They left their friends, neighbourhood and homes during a very sensitive stage of development but as children's vocal abilities are not well developed they can't communicate the way adults can share their feelings. It is hard for them to tell what they are going through and what they need. It is very important to understand children's emotions without understanding their emotions it is difficult to help them fight with their situation. This study shows that for better understanding of children's emotions especially of trauma affected children projective techniques such as HED test is very useful. In this study war affected internally displaced children showed more emotional indicators than undisplaced children also internally displaced children showed more aggressive emotional indicators than undisplaced children on HFD test. These findings shows that war and

trauma of displacement caused serious problems to the psychological wellbeing of children of this area.

References

Catte, M., & Cox, M. V. (1999). Emotional indicators in children's human figure drawing s. *European child & adolescent psychiatry, 2*, 86-91.

Gigi, A. (2015). Human Figure Drawing (HFD) Test is affected by Cognitive Style. *Clini cal and Experimental Psychology*, 2(1).

Harris, D. A. (2009). The paradox of expressing speechless terror: Ritualliminality in the creative arts therapies' treatment of posttraumatic distress. *The arts in Psychotherapy*, 36 (2), 94104. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/SO19745560 9000215 (August10th, 2013)

Koppitz, E. M. (1984). Psychological evaluations of Human Figure Drawings By Middle School Pupils. New York: Allyn and Bacon (2nd ed).

Koppitz, E. M. (1968). Psychological evaluation of children's human figure drawings. Ne w York: Grune and Stratton, Inc.

Koppitz, E. M. (1969). Psychological Evaluation of Children's Human Figure Drawings, Grune & Stratton, N. Y.

Malchiodi, C. A. (2001). Trauma and Loss:Research and Interventions Article Using Dra wing as Intervention with Traumatized Children.

Malchiodi, C. A. (2008). Creative interventions with traumatized children. The Guilford press. New York.

Tielsch, A. H., & Allen, P. J. (2005). Listen to them draw: screening children in primary care through the use of human figure drawings. *Pediatric nursing, 4*, 320-327. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (1998). Guiding Principles onInternal Displacem ent. Retrieved on 28th July, 2015 from http: //www.refworld.org/docid/3c3da07f7.html