

RESILIENCE IN SARAJEVO'S POST-WAR GENERATION: A CULTURALLY-CONSONANT MODEL

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[1] Background: The War in former Yugoslavia disrupted the lives of an entire generation, especially in the city of Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina. Although The War's effects on mental health are well-documented, models for resilience among Sarajevo's youth have yet to be elucidated. For this, anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick offers a framework for investigating resilience, which has been applied in the Afghan setting by psychologist Kenneth Miller, but has not been investigated in the Bosnian context.

[2] Aims: The current study aimed to identify: 1) dimensions of mental health, and 2) domains of distress & well-being, among a cohort of post-war youth in Sarajevo (born after 1992).

[3] Methods: Five men and five women, aged 24-29 were recruited using snowball sampling. Each individual shared three stories (in Bosnian): about peers 'doing well,' 'doing poorly,' and 'about themselves' for a total of 30 narratives. Analysis of interviews followed both conventional and directed content analysis strategies to arrive at the categories (dimensions) and particular expressions within said categories (domains).

[4] Results: Three dimensions of mental health were identified: 'Relation to the nation', 'Pursuit of Basic Needs' and 'Moral Orientation'. Several expressions of distress were identified, including: 'contemplating leaving the country,' 'incongruity between efforts and outcomes,' and 'moral compromise,' respectively. Several expressions of wellbeing were identified, including: 'protective pessimism,' 'economic stability,' and 'moral alignment,' respectively.

[5] Discussion: This study proposes a model of resilience particular to post-war Sarajevans. This includes culturally-specific expressions of well-being (such as protective pessimism) as well as distress (such as engagement in moral compromise). These can form the basis of culturally-consonant screening tools for mental distress and resilience-building. The identification of emic categories of resilience is necessary to both post-conflict reconstruction and to the treatment of diaspora communities, especially in the face of ongoing conflicts in Yemen, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Plan a study attuned to the cultural dimensions of 'resilience'.
2. Recall one domain of well-being and one domain of distress particular to the postwar generation in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina.