

Bullying and Victimization Experiences of Children With Refugee Background

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Abstract : Peer victimization includes a wide range of acts, such as hitting, verbal abuse and social ostracism. The consequences of peer victimization are well documented. Children who have been victimized have a higher risk of various mental disorders that can become chronic. There is increasing migration to Europe and, in particular, to Germany. Children and young people with a refugee background are a particularly vulnerable group in this context. Over 150,000 asylum applications were submitted in Germany in 2023, almost half of which were from children and young people up to the age of 18. In addition, there will be over 1 million war refugees from Ukraine by the end of 2024. These children and young people are at high risk of bullying and victimization, for example, due to direct racist discrimination and exclusion in the host country and in connection with experiences of physical violence as well as criminal or sexual exploitation and forced military recruitment in the home situation and while fleeing. Emotional disorders could be identified in 35-61% of male unaccompanied minor refugees (UMF). Clinical interviews within the group of unaccompanied minors indicate mental disorders in the range of 42% to 56%, primarily in the area of internalizing disorders. The aim of the study is to examine the particularly vulnerable group of children with experiences of flight from the war zone in Ukraine with regard to victimization but also bullying experiences ('perpetrator-victim reversal') in comparison with children with a migration background for socio-political and economic reasons and with children born in Germany. The sample consists of 60 Ukrainian refugees, 60 refugees with a migration background and 60 German-born children of both sexes aged 9-11 years. A standardized instrument was used to record bullying and victimization experiences. The teacher assessment, according to the SDQ, was also used to additionally monitor any learning and behavioral disorders. There are clear group differences, especially with regard to experiences of victimization, which are significantly more frequent and more pronounced in the particularly vulnerable group of children with a refugee background compared to the children with a migrant background and the control group without these characteristics. The children with a refugee background also have significantly higher scores on the SDQ scales with externalizing and internalizing behavioral characteristics. The results are discussed with regard to their implications for (preventive) support concepts for children and adolescents with a refugee background.

Keywords : refugee, migration, Bullying, victimization, children

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