

## **An Investigation Into Culturally Competent Mitigation of Trauma for Refugee Students: Tools for School Based Personnel to Understand Presenting Strengths and Challenges and Enable More Effective Delivery of Counselling Techniques**

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**Abstract :** This study explores current research into student voice and perception of school staff to guide appropriate, culturally competent, trauma-informed interventions that help close the existing academic gap for refugee students. School staff indicate they feel inadequately prepared in cultural competency and trauma-informed practice. While seeking training, limited resources are available to understand the school's provision of culturally competent, trauma-informed teaching. With ongoing increases within Australia's refugee population, alongside growth in school provision of mental health interventions, this work is timely and pertinent to enable refugee students to reach their educational potential and live a fulfilling life in Australia and contribute to society to their fullest potential. Children accepted by Australia under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program are not only culturally and linguistically diverse but subject to tripartite trauma from loss, journey and resettlement stressors, with well-documented and lasting implications including significant psychological distress. Schools receive students whose complex trauma results from the lived experience of war, who have experienced disrupted schooling, who possibly lack literacy in their first language and who may be unaccompanied, augmenting the risk of psychological disorders. Psychological sequelae may include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, emotional delays, attachment issues, self-harm and/or suicidal ideation, which impact memory and, concentration and general learning without the provision of services. The literature has found students are marginalized and suffer mental health conditions and high levels of isolation, in part attributable to an omission of understanding of psychosocial nuance and culture. Additionally, migration-related complex trauma is unfamiliar to staff.

**Keywords :** cultural competency, refugees and asylum seekers, school, trauma

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