

P03-244

PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING IN SRI LANKAN YOUTH: TRAUMA EXPOSURE, PERCEIVED AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES, AND PERCEIVED HELPFULNESS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

G. Fernando¹, K. Miller², J. Garcia¹, J. Prasad³, U. Suseema³, D. Laurin¹, G. Gordon⁴

¹Psychology, California State University, Los Angeles, ²Boston Center for Refugee & Human Rights, Boston, USA, ³Centre for Psychosocial Care, Ampara, Sri Lanka, ⁴Psychology, Pomona College, Claremont, USA

The purpose of this study was to examine how exposure to the armed conflict and the tsunami, perceived availability of resources, and perceived helpfulness of religious practices would predict depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, and psychosocial functioning in a multi-ethnic sample of Sri Lankan youth. A sample of Tamil (174), Sinhalese (332), and Muslim (215) children (girls=391) between 12 and 19 years (mean age =14.4, sd =1.9), completed a survey including demographic questions and items assessing exposure to the conflict and the tsunami, the perceived availability of resources, and perceived helpfulness of religious practices. Scales assessing depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, and psychosocial functioning were also completed. Four hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted with exposure to the conflict and tsunami, perceived availability of resources, and perceived helpfulness of religious beliefs as predictors, and with depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress and psychosocial functioning as outcomes. The results revealed that exposure to the armed conflict significantly predicted posttraumatic stress ($R^2 = .03$, $F [1,494] = 12.77$, $p < .001$), while exposure to the tsunami predicted anxiety ($R^2 = .03$, $F [2,506] = 7.8$, $p < .001$), and perceived availability of resources predicted depression ($R^2 = .09$, $F [4,499] = 11.83$, $p < .001$) and psychosocial functioning ($R^2 = .098$, $F [4,506] = 13.67$, $p < .001$). The results suggest that exposure to traumatic events should not be assumed to be the only or even the most important variable when considering the overall psychological and psychosocial functioning of children in developing countries and traditional cultures. Implications for interventions, policy, and future research are discussed.