
Abstract

Behavioral and Emotional Problems Among Jordanian and Syrian Refugee Children in Noncamp Settings

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Abstract

Background: Refugee children have an increased risk of physical and psychological illness. Data on behavioral and emotional problems among Jordanian and Syrian refugee children in noncamp settings are scarce.

Objective: This study aimed to assess the behavioral and emotional problems among Syrian school children refugees living outside camps in Jordan and their Jordanian counterparts.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among Syrian and Jordanian school children, aged 12-17 years, studying in the same schools in 4 Jordanian cities with the highest density of Syrian refugees. A self-reported questionnaire was used to collect information about the sociodemographic characteristics of the children. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used to measure behavioral and emotional problems among these children.

Results: This study included a total of 1878 Jordanian adolescents (45.6% male and 54.4% female) and 1773 Syrian refugee adolescents (43.9% male and 56.1% female). The parents of the Syrian adolescents were significantly less educated and had significantly lower total family income than Jordanian parents. More than half of the Jordanian and Syrian adolescents had peer relation problems (53.6% and 55.5%, respectively), 36.9% of Jordanian and 35.5% of Syrian adolescents had hyperactivity or inattention problems, 44.8% of Jordanian and 47.6% of Syrian adolescents had conduct problems, and 30.8% of Jordanian and 32.0% of Syrian adolescents had emotional symptoms. On the other hand, 43.0% of Jordanian and 42.5% of Syrian adolescents had prosocial behaviors. In the multivariate analysis, Jordanian and Syrian children differed significantly in emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems. Compared with Jordanian children, Syrian children were less likely to experience emotional problems (odds ratio 0.81; $P=.04$) and peer relationship problems (odds ratio 0.80; $P=.03$).

Conclusions: Emotional and behavioral problems are common among Syrian refugee schoolchildren as well as Jordanian school children. They are all in need of urgent psychosocial support.

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KEYWORDS

emotional problems; behavioral problems; schoolchildren; Syrian refugees; Jordanian

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