# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Internally Displaced Children of Northern Areas of Pakistan

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## INTRODUCTION:

Family dynamics and surrounding physical and psychological atmosphere during childhood are strong predictors of a child's future success, second only to genetic influence. Children growing up in families facing personal or collective tragedy, constitute a risk group for developing psychiatric illness, juvenile delinquency and poor academic achievement.

PTSD is well studied in "Children of War". Children have been declared as the youngest and most vulnerable victims of war and natural disasters. Although DSM-IV recognizes PTSD as a valid pediatric diagnosis, it is often hard to assess in children because of unique psychosocial situation and cultural variations.

Internal displacement is a recently recognized phenomenon resulting from internal strife and natural disasters. Northern areas of Pakistan face a burden of 4 million IDPs because of the war on terror in the bordering areas. People are forced to relocate to areas other than their own homelands. IDP children are exposed to adverse situations, physically as well as mentally. Many of them face loss of one or both parents or loved ones in the family. They witness areal bombing of their homes and serious injury and traumatic deaths. Present study is an attempt to document the existence of adverse psychological sequelae of war and forced displacement in these children.

## MATERIALS & METHODS:

A PTSD checklist was developed based on DSM-IV and piloted in rural and urban locales by authors. Internal and external validity were checked. Final checklist was applied in IDP camp in Peshawar by 30 trained volunteers. Parental consent was obtained for 320 camp children, ages 5-15 years, selected by convenience sampling. Interview data was tabulated in SPSS and analyzed for mean values and frequency of PTSD scores above critical limit.

## RESULTS:

Children were categorized according to age and PTSD Checklist scores. A cumulative frequency of 30.6 % was calculated for all ages. Scores were plotted against age categories and the highest frequency of score above the critical limit was seen between ages 8-10 years

## CONCLUSIONS:

We conclude that PTSD is present in IDP children of Northern Pakistan. Cumulative frequency 0f PTSD for ages 5-15 years in our study population is 30.6 %.

KEYWORDS:

PTSD, Children of war, Pediatrics