

Investigation and evaluation of assessment and psychometric tools used with Refugee and Asylum-Seeking clients in Yorkshire and Humber. Dr Divine Charura.

Surviving the circumstances that many refugees and asylum seekers face has a significant impact on mental health and it is important that those in need of support are given access to appropriate psychological help. However, because of language and cultural issues, commonly used psychometric measures may be insensitive, inaccurate or inappropriate for populations which differ from the sample on which measures were standardized. There has been little research to remedy this and there is a lack of information about the use of psychometric tools in the assessment of those who are currently a refugee or seeking asylum. The project comprised a scoping review and a qualitative study of the psychometric and outcome measures used in assessing refugees and asylum seekers as they accessed non-NHS psychotherapy services in Yorkshire and Humber was conducted.

The scoping review identified a wide range of literature on the use of psychometric tools and assessment outcomes in work with refugees and asylum seekers. The analysis of the literature included a systematic review of over ten different psychometric and outcome tools, including the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), the Generalised Anxiety Scale (GAD-7), the Freedom from Torture Tool, the PTSD Checklist-Civilian version and the Impact of Events Scale (IES-R). The results suggested that, while several measures are used, there is a lack of consistency in the choice of psychometric tools and outcome measures.

Seven interviews with psychotherapists working in voluntary services for refugees and asylum seekers in the Yorkshire and Humber region were conducted. Data gathered from the interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). All the psychotherapists concurred that there is a lack of consistency in the use of psychometric tests in the assessment of refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, four themes emerged; the personal impact on therapists using psychometric tools; the challenge of 'measuring and quantifying' clients' trauma experience; heightened awareness of limitations of using tools and outcome measures with this client group; and the therapist's experience of questioning their own relational and multicultural competencies when working with these client groups.

The review and interviews failed to identify a single standardized psychometric tool that could capture the client's holistic experience and the interconnection of psychological and physical elements. For example, it was difficult to capture client presentations such as neurological functional symptoms related to trauma. While attempts were made by some services to formulate their own biopsychosocial tools, such adapted tools were not validated, standardized or used consistently across services. The results of this study highlight a need for standardized psychometric tools, assessment tools and outcome measures that can effectively capture the experience of refugee and asylum seeker clients. These would assist the process of formulating the relationships between trauma, physical health and psychosocial factors that influence the

development of psychopathology. The findings also highlight the importance of supporting therapists who work with this client group.