



Atrocities of Wars and their Invisible Wounds

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Introduction

Only when you experience the atrocities of war, you will know the real meaning of peace and cordially appreciate it and do your best to prevent wars or at least put them to an end.

Wars have wide spread effects that could be of long or short term. Both soldiers and civilians suffer from the devastating impact of wars but in a different way. Among civilians, women and children are the main war victims. Civilians were the main sufferers of internal wars when compared to state wars. This fact could be explained by the great tendency of combatants to target civilians as a strategic objective. Meanwhile, a state conflict is an armed conflict between 2 parties, one of them is the government of a state [1-4].

Major War Effects

Major effects of war include a huge number of victims, mass destruction of cities, adverse economic outcomes, infrastructure destruction, poor public health services and resources, impaired social order, and catastrophic psychological effects on population [3].

What are the Psychological Effects of Wars and how do they Develop?

War represents one of the most catastrophic life events an individual could face. Dealing with such a huge stress

needs efficient coping strategies and defensive mechanisms that will empower sufferers to develop psychological resilience in order to overcome it and become even stronger than ever.

Those who will fail to handle that critical situation will break either internally or externally with subsequent development of mental disorders and aberrant behavior in the form of anxiety, depression, easy fatigability, sleep disorders, cognitive limitations, pains, sexual dysfunction, poor self-image, frustration, and isolation as internalizing disorders or uncontrollable anger, aggressiveness, conduct disorder, academic or occupational problems, and antisocial behavior as externalizing disorders. Post-traumatic stress disorder is one of the most distressing mental disorders that may develop during or after wars and could manifest internally and or externally [5-7].

How can we Explain the Catastrophic Psychological War Effects?

Human behavior, whether normal or aberrant, is the outcome of the interaction between nature (genetic make-up of an individual) and nurture (acquired or learned) [8] that is controlled by epigenetic mechanisms with alteration of gene expression, due to exposure to different environmental hazards, in a non-mutational way (i.e. no change of genes' sequence but activation and or inhibition of their expression) [9].

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that develops as a distressing response to experiencing or witnessing a remarkably stressful event



involving a life threatening situation or a significant bodily harm as wars. Vivid intrusive memories of the precipitating event, hypervigilance and exaggerated reactivity to possible threats, night mares, and mood disturbances are its main characteristics [10].

PTSD victims usually complain of feeling extremely anxious or scared even if no danger is around as if it could strike at anytime. Normal stress response in such sufferers seems to be locked into permanent overdrive. One of the most significant fingerprints of PTSD is the difficulty found by its victims to normally function in everyday life [7]. As a multifactorial disorder, its prevalence usually ranges between 2% and 9% but it is expected to increase dramatically during or after national or international disasters as wars, floods, or earthquakes [7,8].

Take Home Message

Psychological impact of wars significantly hurts the spirit, soul, mind, emotions, memories, and nearly all physiological body functions of sufferers that necessitates collaboration of all professional efforts to alleviate such drastic percussions and help war victims to deal with them in an appropriate way to improve their quality of life and guide and support them to regain control of their daily functions and duties.

If the psychosocial effects of wars left unattended, they will worsen and costs will be augmented both emotionally and financially due to exhaustion of already limited health services.

On the other hand, honest peace efforts must be carried out to prevent armed conflicts or put them to an end as soon as possible. Also, international laws should be respected and forcibly implemented to protect lives of civilians and their human rights and cover their basic needs at time of wars or after their end.

Conclusion

War victims are not just numbers but they are human beings with different sad and heart breaking stories. In spite of the fact that invisible wounds of soul and mind of war survivors are very difficult to treat and unlikely to disappear, it is crucial to be trained how to face them, express

their internal fears and insecurities, and deal with as early as possible to prevent their endless devastating sequelae on an individual's life. Others should understand, respect, and help war survivors to overcome such an unforgettable hurting experience and move forward or at least not to add to their misery. Lastly but by no means least, to be or not to be will always be our choice, no matter what difficulties and atrocities we might be confronted with.

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