



The Effects of Violence Due to Political Trauma among a Group of Kaqchikqueles in Guatemala

International Psychology

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Research Team

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Introduction

- ▶ The Kaqchiqueles in Guatemala constitute 8.4% of the indigenous population in Guatemala, 22 indigenous groups in total (The World Factbook, 2014).
- ▶ The Highlands in Guatemala has experienced high levels of political violence due to Civil Wars and other post-war conflicts in the 1980s.



Research Goals

- ▶ To explore the effects of violence due to political violence
- ▶ To assess the trauma reactions of indigenous people
- ▶ To address the need for mental health interventions
- ▶ To add to literature in a neglected area of International Psychology

Methodology

- ▶ Mixed Methods
- ▶ Quantitative and qualitative data collected
- ▶ Community partner: Universidad del Valle de Guatemala has a Campus in the area of Highlands (UVG; Altiplano) in the west region of the country
- ▶ Campus is located in Sololá, research site
- ▶ A community leader (Kaqchiquel)

Participants

- ▶ N=18 (8 males, 10 females)
- ▶ Between 34 to 64 years
- ▶ Completed at least 4th grade education
- ▶ Identify as Kaqchikquel
- ▶ Live in the Highlands of Guatemala
- ▶ Experienced the civil war and/or post-war violence

Participant Demographic

| Place of Birth | | Occupation | Marriage Status | | |
|----------------|----|---------------|-----------------|--------------|---|
| Solola | 12 | Unemployed | 2 | Single | 5 |
| Filola | 1 | Employed | 13 | Married | 7 |
| Semelabay | 1 | Agriculture | 3 | Relationship | 2 |
| Semetabaj | 1 | Educator | 3 | Widowed | 4 |
| San Andres | 1 | Administrator | 2 | | |
| Pairpojula | 1 | Artisanal | 2 | | |
| San Lusa | 1 | Housekeeper | 4 | | |
| | | Cook | 1 | | |

Participant Demographic Cont.

Children

Average #

4

Traumatic Event

Actual or threatened death

13

Education

Death of someone else

7

Less than 12th grade

7

Witnessed violence/murder

3

Secondary education

8

Life threatened

2

Victim of War

1

Kidnapping

2

Earthquake

2

Instruments (PHQ-9)

- ▶ 9-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), widely used self-administered instrument for depression screening (Zhang et al. 2015)
- ▶ Used to screen for depression in primary care settings
- ▶ Validated in other populations

Instruments (GAD)

- ▶ A 7-item anxiety scale
- ▶ Scores are as follows (0–4), mild (5–9), moderate (10–14), and severe (15–21)
- ▶ Participants who scores 8 or above can be considered as having significant anxiety symptoms (Sousa et al. 2015)

Instruments (PCL-5)

- ▶ A 17-item measure of PTSD symptomatology and severity
- ▶ Likert scale - Responses range from 1 to 5
- ▶ Total score is computed by summing all items with possible scores ranging from 17 to 85
- ▶ Participants who scored 44 were considered to be PTSD positive
- ▶ Validated in diverse samples and settings (Lang, Satz, Dresselhaus, & Stein, 2003)

Instruments (CD-RISC)

Conner Davidson- Resiliency Scale (CD-RISC)

- ▶ 25-item scale assessing resilience during the last month
- ▶ Higher scores indicating higher resilience capacity
- ▶ Each item is rated on a 5-point range of responses from not true at all (0) to true nearly all time (4)
- ▶ The total score ranges from 0-100
- ▶ Shown to have adequate internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and convergent and divergent validity (Scali et al., 2012)

Results (Quantitative)

| Instruments | Range | Mean | Median |
|-------------|-------|------|--------|
| PHQ-9 | 0-15 | 9 | 11.5 |
| PLC-5 | 13-55 | 34 | 18 |
| CD-RISC | 26-87 | 69 | 75 |
| GAD | 2-21 | 10.5 | 11.5 |

Results (Qualitative)

- ▶ Thematic coding was conducted by three research assistants
- ▶ **Findings showed**
 - ▶ Themes related to the effects of violence
 - ▶ Symptoms related to the political trauma
 - ▶ Coping via supports systems
 - ▶ Community support
 - ▶ Positive coping strategies

Results (Qualitative)

Reactions related to Political Trauma

- ▶ Eight participants (44%) mentioned that they experienced anxiety and fear. *“We are afraid all the time for the dangers here”*
- ▶ Nine participants (50%) mentioned that they experienced sadness/depression. *“I am with illness, pain of the heart. The illness that I have will not pass. I always have the weight”*

Results (Qualitative)

Support Systems

- ▶ Thirteen participants (72%) mentioned that they received support from their family, children, husbands/wives, parents, and siblings.

Community Supports

- ▶ Six participants (33%) mentioned the importance of having community support: *“The community should help to stop what we have grown up with”*
“We are helpers of each other. The community comes together to resolve problems and talk about them”
“To be able to help the community and give them opportunities that other people without privilege do not have. Programs for women that were affected”

Results (Positive Coping Strategies)

- ▶ Twelve participants (67%) mentioned religion has being there main coping strategy: *“Spanish priest from the United States helped me a lot. He was my redeemer, he died. I dedicated myself to study in a school to be a priest to strengthen me”*

“I owe my life to god he is the king, god is in control”

“Years ago I accepted the church. When you’re with Jesus the past does not matter”

“In one of my drunkenness I found a pastor and he told me about god. I accepted the lord and in that time my trust has been in him”

- ▶ Eight participants (44%) stated that work gave them purpose and made them feel better: . *“I help people I advise people” “I have two jobs that helps me keep going”*

Limitations

- ▶ Generalizability of study is limited; small sample size, but still offers some insight into how an indigenous group survived political trauma
- ▶ Study depended on participants' recall
- ▶ Data generated was therefore subjective

Future Directions (Recommendations)

- ▶ **Conduct a larger study to increase generalizability**
- ▶ **Do a comparison study on other Mayan groups on effects of violence**
- ▶ **Establish best practice intervention to help survivors of political violence**

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