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Lived experiences of adolescents with recent history of self-harm – A qualitative study from Pakistan

Aim
Suicide is serious global public health problem and is the 3rd leading cause of death in 15-35 years old. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that more than 70% of suicide deaths are in developing countries. There is limited evidence on self-harm (SH) and suicide from developing countries like Pakistan because these acts are socially and religiously condemned, and are considered as criminal acts. Aim of this study was to explore lived experiences of adolescents with a history of self-harm and their perception about psychosocial intervention.

Methods
In depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 17 adolescents (age 12-18 years) with a history of SH recruited from the different public hospitals of Rawalpindi, Pakistan. A semi-structured topic guide was prepared based on existing literature and findings from discussions of mental health professionals. Framework analysis was done.

Results
The over-arching themes that emerged from analysis were; predisposing (impulsivity, aggression) and precipitating factors (escape from current situation, interpersonal conflicts) of SH, reaction of the family (troublesome, grief), perception of CBT based interventions (perceived as helpful, pictorial worksheets as more effective, involvement of family members).

Conclusion
This study may help in refining a contextual and cultural based explanatory model of selfharm in adolescents. Qualitative data collection and analysis may plays critical role in suicide prevention research by highlighting the perception of target population regarding psychological interventions.

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Family therapy for severe functional disorders in youth; a qualitative analysis

Aim
Current literature generally agrees on the significance of the family for the precipitation and perpetuation of functional disorders in youths. However, family therapy for these patients remains under-researched. To increase knowledge about the patient perspective on family therapy, this qualitative study aimed to explore how youths with severe functional disorders and their parents experience family therapy in a child and adolescent mental health setting.

Methods
Qualitative interviews with 21 participants (8 youths with functional disorders, 8 mothers and 5 fathers) were performed after termination of family therapy. The analysis was based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Results
Two main themes were identified: Theme 1: Dialogue and explanations in the clinical space of family therapy; exploring the youths’ and parents’ experiences of family therapy sessions as a space for dialogical opportunity and for symptom explanations. Theme 2: Addressing family context, dynamics and relations in family therapy; exploring how addressing the family context could be intertwined with difficult emotions such as shame, guilt and feeling blamed.

Conclusion
This study provides important new insights into the under-researched area of how family therapy is experienced by youths with functional disorders and their parents. Family therapy could provide a space for empowering dialogue. The use of multifactorial explanatory models, where the family is seen and framed as part of the solution, rather than as part of the cause, seems important to increase the acceptability of family-based treatments for youths with functional disorders.

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Functional somatic symptoms in preschool children with ADHD: An overseen clinical problem?

Aim
Functional somatic symptoms (FSS), i.e. symptoms that cannot be attributed to well-defined physical diseases, can cause significant morbidity in young people with increased distress, impairment in functioning and health care use. Such symptoms are commonly reported to be associated with emotional symptoms and disorders in childhood. Few studies have explored associations with behavioural problems but report that headaches, recurrent abdominal pain and other unspecific gastrointestinal complaints can also be associated with disruptive behaviors and ADHD. This study explores the level of FSS in a large clinical sample of preschool children with ADHD.

Methods
Parents to 160 children aged 3-7 years with ADHD participated in the current study, which is embedded in a large randomized controlled trial on Danish preschool children with ADHD and the effect of a parenting programme. At baseline parents rated their children’s FSS on a standardized symptom checklist and their ADHD symptoms on the ADHD rating scale for preschool children. Descriptive analyses will be performed to explore the type, prevalence and impact of FSS in this clinical sample compared to an age-matched population-based sample of children.

Results
Analyses are pending but preliminary results indicate a higher prevalence of various FSS in children with ADHD compared to children from the general population. The detailed study design and final results will be presented at the conference.

Conclusion
The results may point to unmet health needs related to unspecific physical problems in young children with ADHD. This could have implications for future clinical assessment and treatment of this patient group.

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