



Cognitive Health and Social Reconstruction

Impact of political violence on the cognitive health of survivors of the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi.

Political violence has a negative impact on the cognitive health of individuals exposed to it, even decades later.

KEY FINDINGS

Even twenty years after the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, the cognitive functioning of individuals exposed to highly emotional and potentially traumatic situations remains negatively impacted by these exposures.

The higher the number of negative events to which these individuals have been exposed, the worse they perform on complex cognitive tasks, including tasks related to short-term memory.

These observations were made among 470 Rwandans who were 10+ years old at the time of the genocide.

It is imperative to consider the cognitive health of individuals when developing programs aimed at rebuilding lasting peace within afflicted societies.

It is easy to imagine that being exposed to severe socio-political violence during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi had an impact on the emotional health of individuals. But what impact did it have on their cognitive health?

This question is crucial for rebuilding lasting peace within nations exposed to armed and intergroup violence. The process of reconstructing sustainable peace, both at the personal and collective levels, involves relying on individuals' cognitive functions, specifically their short-term memory capacity and executive functions.



FOR MORE INFO



Blanchette, I., et al. (2019). Long term cognitive correlates of exposure to political violence: Short-term memory in Rwanda twenty years after the genocide. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, 11(2), 147-155