



# Displaced, Overlooked, and Disadvantaged: A Systematic Review of Mental Health Studies of Syrian Refugees

Melissa Meinhart<sup>1-2</sup>, Erin Mills<sup>1</sup>, Lynn Michonopolous<sup>1-2</sup>, Nabila El-Bassel<sup>1-2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Columbia University, <sup>2</sup>Social Intervention Group

## Background

Syrian refugees are at risk for ongoing and multiple traumatic events from the war and forced migration. These experiences are interrelated, cumulative, and complex and impact mental health outcomes (depression, PTSD, grief, suicidality)<sup>1,2</sup>. Limited research has been conducted in this area. Given the high levels of exposure to traumatic events among Syrian refugees, there is a need for research to better understand how their experiences may impact mental health outcomes and inform mental treatment and services.

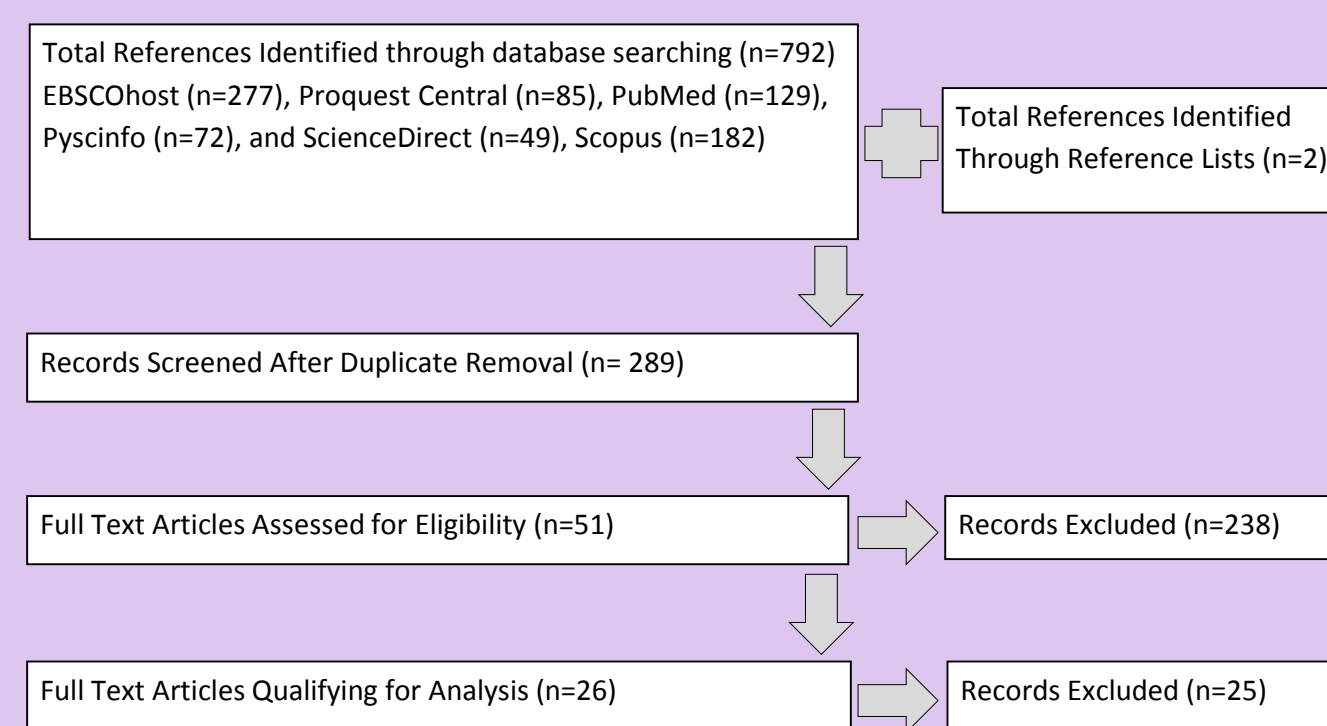
## Objective

The purpose of this review was to identify the state of mental health research for Syrian refugees and inform future research to understand better their experiences and the type of mental health responses.

## Methods

- We conducted systematic review of mental health studies of adult Syrian refugees in peer-reviewed published papers (Jan 2011 – Nov 2016).
- We included both intervention and descriptive studies in the review.
- We identified 792 papers and 26 met the inclusion criteria for analysis in this systematic review.

Fig 1. PRISMA Flow Chart



## Findings

- The average sample size of participants in each of the 26 papers was 284.
- The vast majority of studies took place in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.
- Over a third of the studies focused on in-camp refugees.
- PTSD diagnosis and mental health symptomatology were the most commonly examined mental health components.
- While 58% of the 26 studies used previously established psychometrics measurements, only 11 studies examined the applicability of their psychometrics on Syrian refugees.
- The two most common measures used in the 26 papers were the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) and Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview Plus.

## Conclusions

- There is a need to invest in mental health research for Syrian refugees to understand their mental health experiences and inform services and treatment approaches. Moreover, more attention should be placed on mental health intervention research.
- Future studies should include large sample size, representative of the diverse population of Syrian refugees (ie. outside camps and Middle East).
- More research is needed on the design, adaptation and testing of psychometrics so that study instruments can be culturally appropriate and accurately capture refugee experiences.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Columbia University's ASPIRE. This study was financially supported through the Columbia University Presidents Global Initiative.

## References

- Eisenbruch, M., de Jong, J.T. & de Put, W. (2004). Bringing order out of chaos: A culturally competent approach to managing the problems of refugees and victims of organized violence. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. (17)2: 23–131.
- Silove, D. (2004). The psychosocial effects of torture, mass human rights violations, and refugee trauma: Toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 187(4): 200-207.

