

ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING RULES FOR THE SCREENING INSTRUMENT FOR TRAUMATIC STRESS-REVISED IN EARTHQUAKE SURVIVORS

The revised version of the Screening Instrument for Traumatic Stress in Earthquake Survivors (Başoğlu et al., 2001) (SITSES-R; Başoğlu & Şalcıoğlu, 2011) involves 3 parts. Part 1 includes information on demographic, personal history and trauma characteristics. These are the risk factors that we found relevant to earthquake trauma. Part II, Traumatic Stress Symptom Checklist (TSSC), includes 17 PTSD symptoms and 6 depression symptoms assessed in relation to 'last week'. Part 3 assesses the severity of the subjective distress, social, occupational and family functioning, and need for psychological help. Below are some DOs and DONTs in the administration of the scales and scoring rules for the TSSC.

- Make sure that you use all three sections of the SITSES (i.e., Survivor Information Form, TSSC, Severity of Disability Scale) for screening.
- Give the survivor a brief explanation of the purpose of screening and obtain verbal informed consent before beginning. Briefly describe how to fill in the questionnaire. You may benefit from reminding the survivor that these questions are asked in relation to earthquake trauma they have been exposed to.
- Sometimes survivors fail to understand or try to make sure that they have correctly understood what is meant in a specific item. In such cases do not try to explain them the items. Tell them that they should answer the questions as they think they have understood them.
- In case of illiterate survivors read out the questions to them and take note of their answers yourself. Make sure that you read the items exactly as they are worded. Again, if the survivor cannot understand any questions, do not try to explain them. Read the item a few times and ask them to answer as they think they have understood it. Do not use your own judgment in rating the distress associated with a symptom. Only note the survivor's answer.
- Survivors tend to leave blank some questions. Such missing data usually challenge the reliability of the scores on the scale. To avoid having a lot of missing data check to see whether any questions have been left blank as soon as you collect the scale from the survivor. If they have, ask them to answer those items they have left blank.
- Some survivors let other family members or friends to fill in the questionnaire they are handed. Therefore, make sure that they fill in the scales alone without intervention from other people.
- The scoring of TSSC is fairly simple. There are 4 columns in the scale. The first column denoted 'not at all' is scored as **0**, the second 'slightly' as **1**, the third 'fairly' as **2**, and the forth 'very much' as **3**. The first 17 symptoms of the scale represent PTSD. A score of 25 or more on this part means that the person is likely to have PTSD. The remaining 6 symptoms are depression symptoms and a score of 38 or more on all items - all 23 - means that the survivor is likely to have depression co-morbid to PTSD. Please note that with this scoring method it is not possible to make a diagnosis of depression without PTSD.

REFERENCES

- Bařođlu, M. & řalciođlu, E. (2011). *A Mental Healthcare Model for Mass Trauma Survivors: Control Focused Treatment of Earthquake, War, and Torture Trauma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bařođlu, M., řalciođlu, E., Livanou, M., Ozeren, M., Aker, T., Kilic, C. & Mestcioglu, O. (2001). A study of the validity of a Screening Instrument for Traumatic Stress in Earthquake Survivors in Turkey. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 14, 491-509.