

Psychological Trauma, Justice, and Recovery: The Impact of International Criminal Accountability for War Crimes on Victims of Contemporary Conflicts

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between psychological recovery and international criminal accountability for war crimes in contemporary armed conflicts. Victims of war crimes often experience severe psychological consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and long-term emotional distress. While psychological interventions play a crucial role in recovery, the pursuit of justice through international criminal mechanisms may also contribute significantly to victims' healing processes. The paper examines how investigations, prosecutions, and convictions conducted by international tribunals influence victims' perceptions of justice, recognition, and social restoration. Particular attention is given to the role of the International Criminal Court and other international judicial bodies in addressing impunity and supporting post-conflict reconciliation. The study further analyzes the psychological effects of participation in judicial proceedings, including testimony and victim representation. It argues that accountability mechanisms can facilitate emotional validation and strengthen trust in legal institutions, although they may also generate risks of retraumatization. Understanding the interaction between justice and psychological recovery is essential for developing victim-centered approaches in post-conflict settings. The findings highlight the importance of integrating legal accountability with psychological support services to promote individual healing and sustainable peace.

Keywords: Psychological Trauma; War Crimes; Victims; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder;



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