

ABSTRACT

Immigrant survivors of torture (SOTs) are often exposed to multiple traumatic events throughout the migration process that may result in distress. Research on coping strategies for this population is limited by small, nationally homogeneous samples, and by a singular measurement of coping (e.g., only after migration). The present study used archival data from a specialty clinic for SOTs to assess participants’ (N=381) changes in self-reported coping strategies from pre- to post- migration. A McMemar test was used to determine the relationship between reported coping strategy and phase of migration. A Generalized Estimating Equation was used to determine confound variables. Results show that participants reported a decrease in social support coping and a continuation of religious coping strategies from pre- to post-migration.



Immigrant Survivors of Torture: Pre- and Post-Migration Coping Approaches

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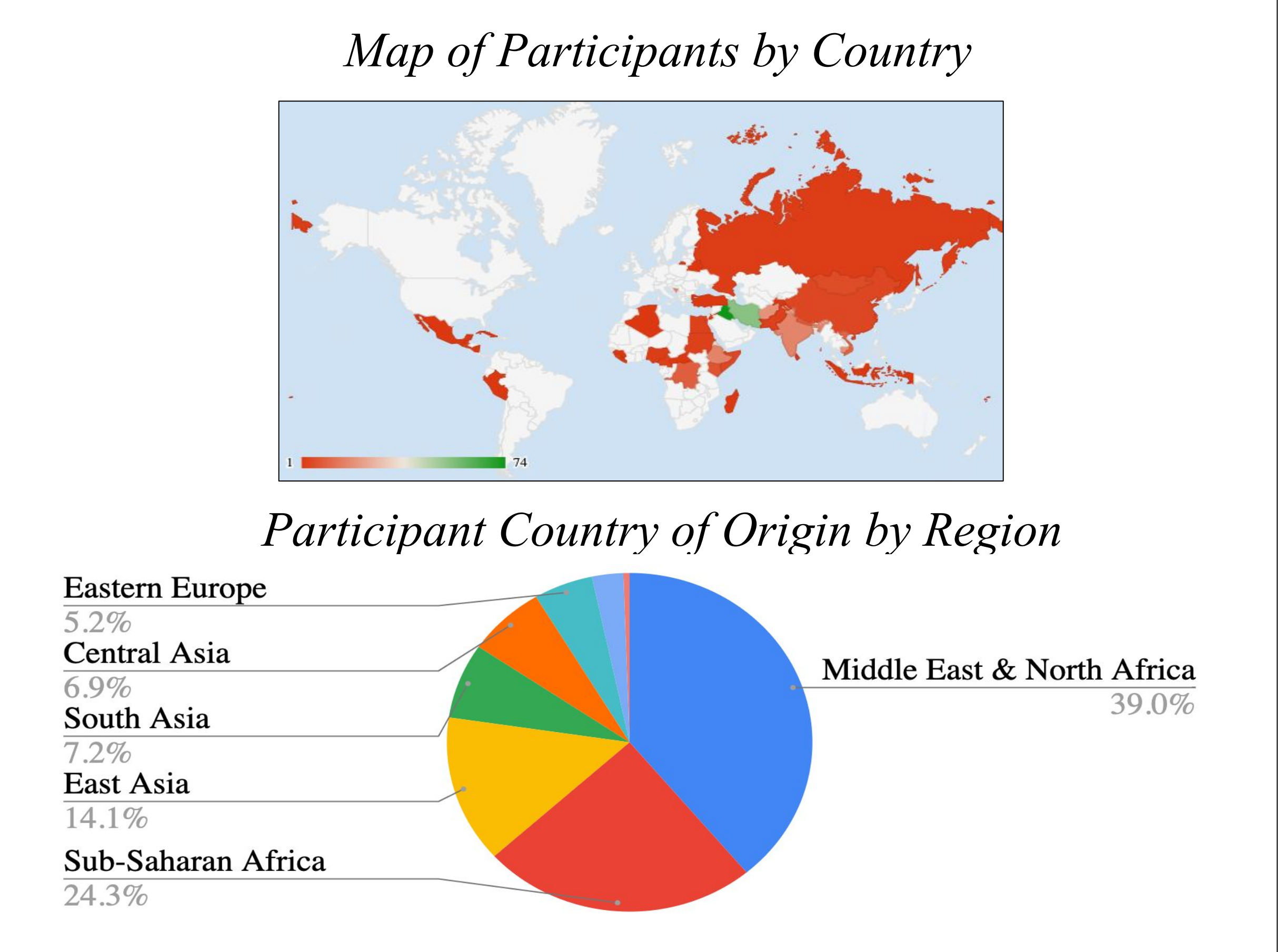
INTRODUCTION

- *Background:* Immigrant SOTs commonly experience exposure to multiple traumatic events before, during, and after migration. While trauma exposure substantially contributes to a higher risk of mental health problems, such as depression and PTSD, advancing research on coping among immigrant SOTs is needed to better inform clinicians in how to treat the immigrant SOTs in a culturally-informed and strengths-based approach.
- *Study Aim:* This study investigates coping patterns before and after migration among immigrant SOTs from multiple countries of origin by assessing coping strategies retrospectively (e.g., recall/ before migration) and currently (e.g., present day/ after migration).
- *Hypothesis:* The proportion of participants who reported primarily using religious or social support coping styles before migration will be different to the proportion of participants who report using these coping styles after migration, such that reported use of social support coping will *decrease* and religious coping will *increase*.

METHOD

- *Participants:* Adult immigrant SOTs (N = 381, 48% male) from 45 countries of origin. Mean age was 41.2, and ranged from 18 to 84 years.
- *Procedure:* The data was obtained from intake interviews and assessments for non-research purposes and later used to answer the research questions. The archival charts were dated from the past ten years, and up to 3 months before data collection took place.
- *Coping Measure:* Coping strategies used both pre- and post-migration were assessed with the question “*What are some of the things you do to make yourself feel better now, or when you were experiencing difficulty in your country?*” Participants responded with free recall as the interviewer circles pre- and post-migration coping strategies on a list of 21 coping strategies.
- *PTSD Measure:* PTSD Checklist (PCL-C; Weathers et al., 1994)
- *Depression Measure:* Hopkins Symptom Checklist Depression Scale (HSCL-25; Hesbacher et al., 1980)

FIGURES



RESULTS

- *Data Analyses:* A McNemar statistical test was used to determine the difference in the proportion of participants who reported primarily using social or religious coping strategies before and after migration. None of the controlling variables (i.e., gender, age, and highest education level) appeared to significantly affect the relationship between reported coping strategy and phase of migration (before and after migration). *Findings:* The results supported the hypothesis that the proportion of participants who reported using religion as a coping mechanism before migration was significantly smaller than the proportion of participants who reported using religion as a coping strategy after migration.

TABLE 1

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Phase of Migration and Coping Strategy

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Before Migration			
Religious Coping	371	0.42	0.49
Social Coping	370	0.45	0.50
After Migration			
Religious Coping	371	0.54	0.50
Social Coping	371	0.51	0.50

TABLE 2

Table 2
McNemar Test for Change in Proportion of Participants Using Religious and Social Coping Styles Before and After Migration

	<i>n</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Pre- and Post-Religious Coping	371	28.02	0.00
Pre- and Post-Social Coping	370	3.84	0.50

CONCLUSION

- *Discussion:* By deepening our current understanding of coping strategies used by an international sample at different time points in the migration process, this study contributes to culturally informed research and clinical practice for this unique and highly vulnerable population. The post-migration increase in the proportion of immigrant SOTs who rely on religion to cope suggests that clinicians could provide culturally competent care by providing clients with resources for local religious organizations.
 - *Future Directions:* Researchers may continue to explore values-congruent coping styles for immigrant SOTs by clarifying the role of support coping for this population and whether taking part in a religious community facilitates social support coping as well as religious coping.
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