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SOCIETY'S HOSTILITY, ANGER, MISTRUST TOWARDS REFUGEES, ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND



IMMIGRANTS: SPIRAL OF NEGATIVE FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS

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A systematic review of the literature underlined the harmful impact of society's discrimination in the forms of hostility, anger and mistrust, on the wellbeing of refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants (hereafter RASI). Many studies reveal that tough migration laws, externalization of borders, increased fear of detention and/or deportation, negative media views, and even, mistrust and prejudice experienced at health and social services, all seem to lead to a spiral of fear and mistrust. In other words, while those negative experiences damage the wellbeing of RASI, they also lead these persons to mistrust or refuse support from professionals, whose help they badly need. A qualitative study using information from RASI (15), as well as professionals (7) who provide care for them revealed that discrimination and hostile treatment from society triggered feelings of anger, grief and loss, sadness, loneliness and isolation, emotional pain, learned helplessness, frustration, rejection, fear, injustice and general mistrust; revealed also a negative impact on those persons coping mechanisms, and showed that they may lead to negative behaviours towards self or others. Studies are needed to further assess whether negative behaviours are present, and to build psychoeducational interventions that can be implemented to prevent those behaviours.

Keywords:

Hostility, mistrust, anger, refugees, immigrants, asylum-seekers

About the author

Maria José Rebelo: Academic/Professional training:

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Work experience (most relevant):

- Work with Lifeline (Brisbane – Australia) – from May 2005-Nov 2006
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