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Effectiveness of a climbing (bouldering) intervention on psychological wellbeing for adolescents in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon: (How) does it work?

Submission date
29/03/2022

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
01/04/2022

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
16/09/2024

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[X] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The Lebanon Climbing Project aims to investigate the effect of climbing therapy on the wellbeing of adolescent refugees and Lebanese youth from marginalized communities. Over the course of the 8 week intervention period, adolescents living in or near the Bekaa valley refugee camps take part in weekly 2-hour therapy sessions. In these sessions, participants learn various climbing techniques as well as educational content intended to strengthen the participants' self-worth, give them a sense of belonging and promote their 'life skills'. Further topics are conflict management, mindfulness, communication and peacebuilding.
Lebanon, a country already burdened by economic crisis, outdated infrastructure and poverty took in an enormous number of refugees in the wake of the war in Syria. These refugees have been exposed to adverse living conditions and severe ongoing stressors, creating a need for scalable, low-threshold mental health interventions like climbing therapy.
There is already published research that suggests the effectiveness of such interventions. Sports has been shown to mend a variety of conditions ranging from depression to post-traumatic stress syndrome, while at the same time improving self-esteem and overall quality of life. In a humanitarian aid context, physical activity programs have had positive effects on self-confidence, resilience and interpersonal skills. Additionally, climbing therapy’s effectiveness in treating depression has already been found to be on par with cognitive behavioral therapy in an adult non-refugee group.

Who can participate?
Adolescents (14-19 years) living in or near refugee camps in the Central Bekaa Valley (Tanaayel)

What does the study involve?
Equal distribution to groups according to basic variables by hand to maximise adherence:
1. Intervention group: eight sessions of group climbing therapy
2. Waitlist Control group: same intervention after 8 weeks of waiting

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Benefits:
Participants taking part in the climbing therapy group will receive a therapeutic treatment, that is likely to improve quality of life and wellbeing. At a minimum, participants enjoy 16 hours of physical activity shared with others.
Risks:
In previous studies, which contained more than 1000 hours of therapeutic bouldering there were no injuries that required medical treatment. Also, the intervention is carried out by two instructors, who are specially trained in safety rules by a climbing instructor of the Swiss Alpine Club. Nevertheless, there is a risk of slight injuries, which does not exceed the risk of other physical activities.

Where is the study run from?
Friedrich Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany and Antonine University, Lebanon

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
April 2021 to November 2023

Who is funding the study?
Mammut sports group (Switzerland)
Psychiatric University Hospital Erlangen (Germany)

Who is the main contact?
PD Dr Katharina Luttenberger, katharina.luttenberger@uk-erlangen.de

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Dr Katharina Luttenberger

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9877-5423

Contact details
Psychiatric University Clinic Erlangen
Schwabachanlage 6
Erlangen
Germany
91054
+49 91318534650
katharina.luttenberger@uk-erlangen.de

Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
3011171

Study information

Scientific Title
Waitlist-controlled intervention study regarding psychological wellbeing of young Syrian refugees and marginalised Lebanese youth: Effectiveness of a psychosocial climbing intervention in the Bekaa valley, a mixed model approach

Acronym
YOUClimb

Study objectives
The intervention group improves significantly more in psychological wellbeing than the waitlist group

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 15/02/2022, Ethics Committee at the Antonine University (CEUA, B.P. Antonine University 40016 Hadat-Baabda, Lebanon; +961 5927000; contact@ua.edu.lb), ref: 2792022, Folder 157

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Single-center interventional waitlist controlled group intervention

Study type(s)
Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Psychological wellbeing of Syrian refugees and marginalised Lebanese youth living in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

Interventions
Psychosocial climbing intervention with 8 sessions, 2 h each, 1 per week. The Intervention is performed in a group of about 10-12 participants with 2 facilitators and up to 4 volunteers by the non-profit organisation ClimbAID in Tanayel, Lebanon. The intervention focuses on trust /respect, communication and conflict resolution and involves specific bouldering exercises, psychosocial interventions and mindfulness exercises. The waitlist control group gets the same intervention after an 8 weeks waiting period.

Group allocation is pseudorandomized, adjustments according to specific needs might be necessary. The Control group gets the chance of participating in the same intervention after post-test data collection. Data collection is via self-report questionnaires and qualitative interviews. Additional session reporting data is analysed.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Overall mental wellbeing is measured with the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) at baseline and after the intervention (8 weeks)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Distress severity measured using the K-6 Distress Scale at baseline and after intervention (8 weeks)
2. General self-efficacy using the General Self-Efficacy (GSE) scale at baseline and after intervention
3. Social stability attitudes using two modified questions from the ARK regular perception survey at baseline and after intervention
4. Qualitative interviews regarding reach, effectiveness and barriers are conducted
5. Session reporting is analysed regarding implementation and adoption (RE-AIM model)

Completion date
01/11/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Aged between 14 and 19 years
2. Written informed consent of parents or young adult
3. Ability to reach the climbing intervention

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
14 Years

Upper age limit
19 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
233

Key exclusion criteria
Physical contraindications against climbing

Date of first enrolment
15/04/2022

Date of final enrolment
01/09/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Lebanon

Study participating centre
ClimbAID
Arcenciel Centre
Beirut-Damaskus Road
Taanayel, Central Bekaa
Lebanon
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Sponsor information

Organisation
Universitätsklinikum Erlangen

ROR
https://ror.org/0030f2a11

Organisation
Antonine University

ROR
https://ror.org/03gc39678

Funder(s)

Funder type
Industry

Funder Name
Mammut Sports group, Birren 5, Seon Switzerland for costs of personel in Lebanon

Funder Name
Investigator initiated and funded

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study will be available upon request from PD Dr. Katharina Luttenberger, katharina.luttenberger@uk-erlangen.de or made available in the public repository zenodo. This applies to fully anonymised data after publication of the main hypotheses.

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository, Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		14/09/2024	16/09/2024	Yes	No
Protocol article		28/02/2023	13/03/2023	Yes	No
Protocol file	version 1	24/01/2022	31/03/2022	No	No