Self-reported childhood maltreatment, lifelong traumatic events and mental disorders in fibromyalgia syndrome: a comparison of US and German outpatients.

The robustness of findings on retrospective self-reports of childhood maltreatment and lifetime traumatic experiences of adults with fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) has not been demonstrated by transcultural studies. This is the first transcultural study to focus on the associations between FMS, childhood maltreatment, lifetime psychological traumas, and potential differences between countries adjusting for psychological distress. 71 age-and sex-matched US and German FMS outpatients were compared. Childhood maltreatment were assessed by the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and potential, traumatic experiences by the trauma list of the Munich Composite International Diagnostic Interview. Potential posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was diagnosed according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV-TR symptom criteria by the Posttraumatic Diagnostic Scale. Potential depressive and anxiety disorder were assessed by the Patient Health Questionnaire PHQ 4. US and German patients did not significantly differ in the amount of self-reported childhood maltreatment (emotional, physical and sexual abuse or neglect) or in the frequency of lifetime traumatic experiences. No differences in the frequency of potential anxiety, depression, and PTSD were seen. Psychological
distress fully accounted for group differences in emotional and sexual abuse and emotional and physical neglect. The study demonstrated the transcultural robustness of findings on the association of adult FMS with self-reports of childhood maltreatment and lifelong traumatic experiences. These associations are mainly explained by current psychological distress.

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