

Exploring the Impact of Disasters on Mental Health: Man vs Wild

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Abstract

This paper examines the current literature to explore the impact of disasters on mental health. It discusses the different types of mental health issues faced by survivors of disasters and examines the relationship between mental health and disasters. It looks at the ways in which disasters can lead to long-term psychological effects and impact of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on individuals. It also considers the various interventions available to help individuals affected by disasters and suggests ways in which mental health services can be improved in the aftermath of a disaster. Finally the paper discusses the need for a better understanding of the psychological effects of disasters and the importance of providing mental health support to survivors.

Key words: mental health, disasters, aftermath, psychological, survivors

Introduction

Natural disasters such as earthquakes are the events that not only lead to economic losses, physical injuries, and deaths, but they can also cause serious mental health problems (Wang et al, 2009). Disasters cause serious and extreme disruptions in the normal functioning of a community (Naushad et al, 2019). Natural hazards like tsunamis, earthquake, floods, cyclones, landslides and hurricanes cause huge damage to life and property. The huge pressure of population on land, coupled with deforestation has increased the number of disasters and their severity (Naushad et al, 2019).

Disasters are unexpected and catastrophic events that can lead to significant loss of life, property, and livelihoods. These events can have a profound impact on mental health, both in the short and long term. This research paper will explore the impact of disasters on mental health, including the psychological effects of exposure to disasters, the prevalence of mental health disorders among disaster survivors, and the potential interventions to support mental health in the aftermath of disasters. The most studied is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder along with depression and anxiety (Orengo-Aguayo et al, 2019; Schwind et al, 2015; Mamun et al, 2019; Waite et al, 2017; Tang et al, 2018). The impact of disasters on mental health has been increasingly recognised in recent years. Disasters can have a significant impact on the mental

well-being of those affected, with survivors often experiencing a range of mental health issues including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. The psychological effects of disasters can be particularly damaging if they are not properly addressed and managed. This paper will explore the current literature to gain a better understanding of the impact of disasters on mental health and the various interventions that can be used to help individuals affected by a disaster. It will also look at ways in which mental health services can be improved in the aftermath of a disaster. Mental health is an important factor in overall health and well-being, and disasters can have a profound impact on the mental health of those affected. People who experience a disaster can be at increased risk of psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and wildfires can cause physical and emotional trauma. People affected may lose loved ones, their homes, and belongings, and may face displacement and financial hardships. This can lead to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and loss of control. Survivors may also experience survivor's guilt, intrusive memories, and difficulty sleeping. Children can be especially vulnerable to the mental health effects of disasters. They may worry about their families' safety, experience separation from their parents, and feel overwhelmed by the chaotic environment. In addition, they may suffer from symptoms of PTSD, such as flashbacks, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts. Adults can also suffer from the long-term effects of disasters. Studies have found that adults who experienced a disaster can suffer from depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions for years after the event. The degree and extent of exposure to a disaster varies depending on the type of disaster and relation of the victim with the disaster. For example, those who witness a disaster directly will have a higher degree of exposure than those who rarely heard about it (Naushad et al, 2019).

Methodology

Qualitative literature was used in this paper to understand the linkages between disasters and their impact on mental health. In this study, disaster and mental health as a concept has been used in holistic sense. Different permutation and combinations of certain keywords such as 'mental health', 'post- traumatic stress disorder', 'psychological health', 'disaster effects', 'disaster impact' etc. Have been used in this review to identify the relevant literature.

The Psychological Effects of Exposure to Disasters

Exposure alone however does not fully explain the onset of PTSD as many individuals do not develop such symptoms. Indeed, events are not inherently 'traumatic', but may be appraised as such (Mason et al, 2010). Exposure to disasters can have a range of psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and other stress-related disorders. These effects can be experienced by survivors, first responders, and even those who witness disasters from afar through media coverage. PTSD is a common mental health disorder experienced by disaster survivors, characterized by symptoms such as flashbacks, avoidance, and hyperarousal. Depression and anxiety are also common, often resulting from the loss of loved ones, homes, and communities. Posttraumatic stress disorder constitutes the most common postdisaster psychiatric diagnosis among most disaster-exposed populations;

major depression is generally second in prevalence and is often comorbid with PTSD (Norris et al, 2002; North et al, 2008; Quarantelli, 1985; North et al, 1999).

Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders Among Disaster Survivors

Most disaster survivors experience a number of responses in the aftermath of a disaster, such as feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, numbness and sleep disturbances (Den Ouden et al, 2007). However, some survivors are more affected than others and develop serious mental health problems, such as anxiety disorders, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Norris et al, 2002; Green et al, 1994; Green et al, 1990; Yzermans et al, 2004). Disasters are events with predictable long-term psychological effects (J. Davidson and A. MacFarlane, 2006). The prevalence of mental health disorders among disaster survivors varies depending on the type of disaster and the population affected. Studies have shown that the prevalence of PTSD among disaster survivors can range from 5% to 50%, depending on the severity of the disaster and the level of exposure. Depression and anxiety are also common, with rates ranging from 10% to 30%. Children and elderly populations are particularly vulnerable to the psychological effects of disasters, as are those with pre-existing mental health conditions.

Interventions to Support Mental Health in the Aftermath of Disasters

There is a great need for long-term prospective studies on the effects of disaster and more interventional studies to find out the effectiveness of supportive measures provided to the victims (Kar. N, 2010). Effective planning reduces distress for affected personnel and community members and optimizes access to needed mental health care following the event [21]. (Morganstein and Ursano, 2020). Government as well as psychosocial interventions (it comprises acceptance as a coping skill and awareness programmes) help the victims to adapt to the changes they experience post-disaster. These interventions help the victims in normalising their mental health despite their loss. The victims who might develop psychotic symptoms are guided with the help of psycho-education and are encouraged to lead a better and positive life (N.Makwana, 2019). There are a range of interventions that can be used to support mental health in the aftermath of disasters. These include psychological first aid, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and medication for those with severe symptoms. Psychological first aid is a supportive approach that focuses on meeting the basic needs of disaster survivors, such as food, water, and shelter, while also providing emotional support and referrals for further care. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a form of talk therapy that can help individuals with PTSD, depression, and anxiety to manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life.

Conclusion

The research paper has concluded that disasters can have a significant and lasting impact on mental health. The impact of disasters on mental health is often more severe than on physical health and can be experienced in both the short and long-term. Mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety can all be triggered by a disaster. Furthermore, the effects of a disaster on mental health can be felt by individuals, families, and communities alike. The research paper has highlighted the importance of having effective

psychological interventions in place to help support those affected by disasters. Through providing individuals with the opportunity to express and process their experiences, mental health professionals can help to reduce the psychological burden of disasters.

Disasters have a significant impact on mental health, both in the short and long term. The psychological effects of exposure to disasters can lead to PTSD, depression, anxiety, and other stress-related disorders. The prevalence of mental health disorders among disaster survivors varies depending on the type of disaster and the population affected. There are a range of interventions that can be used to support mental health in the aftermath of disasters, including psychological first aid, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and medication. It is essential to provide support to those affected by disasters to ensure that their mental health needs are met and that they can recover and rebuild their lives. It is important for individuals to seek help and support if they experience mental health issues as a result of a disaster, in order to reduce the severity of the impact. In addition, it is important for governments and organizations to provide effective support and resources to those affected by disasters, in order to promote resilience and well-being.

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