

IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS IN INDIVIDUALS LIFE

Sureshkumar OG

PhD Research Scholar in Sociology Department, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

641046

Email. ogskumar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of natural disasters in individuals life and their social status. To fulfil this study an effort has been made to observe the existing qualitative literature on natural disaster and the reaction of a common people. Based on the review of literature, the subsequent wide themes have been identified: natural disaster and its effect on genders, effects of disaster on common people. By this review, various defending factors, including resilience and other surviving strategies which amplified the individual's capacity while encountering these types of negative situation, have been identified. It also highlighted the efficiency of post-disaster intervention techniques. Thus, better preparedness and social empowerment can improve the condition of the unaided population affected by the disaster.

INTRODUCTION

Natural Disasters are a multifaceted universal problem. Natural Disasters are an event of nature the result of natural causes, for example landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis and tropical cyclones. Man-made disasters are brought about by human actions, including military conflicts, terrorism, political unrest and industrial accidents. However, research suggests that both natural and social factors cause disasters, e.g. flooding might be the result of the combination of deforestation and climate change

Disasters can create massive effects on a community likely from economic to social and from physical to psychological. Every year both the individuals and communities are being affected by natural disasters, which disrupts their mental status and well-being. Disaster impacts may consist of loss of life, injury, disease and other negative effects on human physical, mental

and social wellbeing. Along with these, it can cause damage to property, destruction of assets, loss of services, social and economic distraction and environmental dilapidation.

A disaster collapses the standard pattern of life, causing both physical and emotional suffering and an overwhelming sense of helplessness and hopelessness. The impact on the socioeconomic formation of a region and environment often requires outside assistance and intervention. Economic and social development throughout the world is frequently interrupted by natural disasters.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Every year, thousands of people are affected by natural disasters. Disasters may be earthquakes, floods or cyclones. In a disaster, we face a lot of physical injuries even death. It may cause heavy property damage which leads to hopeless life especially for common middle class people. Disaster issues of common man, in general, have been considered as a deserted subject especially in Tamilnadu. Thus, in order to fulfil this gap, there is a necessity to understand this study area.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- To study the importance of preparedness for a disaster.
- The impact of disasters can be neutralized with the help of some variables like the willingness for positive psychological adjustment of the victims, the ability of the community to adapt to the environment.
- The coping mechanism helps to minimize the negative impact of disasters on mental health.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the disaster management system provoked in Tamilnadu.
- To understand how an individual can overcome the situation physically and mentally.
- To know the importance given to the common people in Tamilnadu.

NATURAL DISASTERS AND TAMILNADU

Developing countries faces more disasters due to the various factors like poverty, lack of resources, lack of educational consciousness, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient in trained manpower, lack of awareness and knowledge of disaster mental stress.

India is vulnerable to natural disasters, especially; Tamilnadu state of India faces typical types of natural disasters like landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis and tropical cyclones which leads to a significant loss in the society. The aftermath of disasters has a significant impact on the socio-economic and mental states of the people particularly, gender based common civilians.

Tamil Nadu state covers an area of approximately 13, 00,580 kms and has a coastline of about 1,076 kms which is about 15% of the coastline of India. The geographical pattern of Tamil Nadu makes the state exposed to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and earthquake-tsunami. The major landslide zone is Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu state, which is one of the high landslide hazard prone areas of India. In the recent times casualties and damage due to landslides have rapidly increased in the Nilgiri region.

About 8% of the state is affected by four to five cyclones every year, from that, two to three could be severe. Cyclonic activities on the east coast region are more severe than on the west coast region, and happen mainly between the month of April-May and October-November. Tamil Nadu is also under the attack of annual flooding, including flash floods, cloudburst floods, monsoon floods and cyclonic floods. Annually, thousands of people are affected, a few hundred lives are lost, thousands are rendered homeless and several hectares of agricultural lands are spoiled. Tamil Nadu is also prone to very severe damaging earthquakes. Its people feel much more vulnerable to earthquake-induced tsunamis since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which affected the coast of Tamil Nadu is destroying much of the marine biology and severely damaging the ecosystem. Crops, settlements, trees, birds, fishes, wildlife, and properties were destroyed. Power and communications were totally disrupted. The damage to humans, especially women and children, was tremendous, resulting in emotional and mental suffering.

GENERAL REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

Following disaster, people frequently feel stressed, exhausted or confused, disoriented or unable to incorporate distressing information. Once these initial reactions prevailed, people can experience a variety of thoughts and behaviors. The basic common responses by the people can be:

Strong unpredictable feelings. They may be anxious, nervous, overwhelmed or grief-stricken. And also feel more irritable than usual.

Changes in thoughts and behaviorism. Might have repeated and stunning memories of the event. These memories may happen for no proper reason and may lead to physical response such as increase in heartbeat or sweating. It may be hard to make decisions. Inevitable changes in regular activities like sleep and eating — few people may over react to fundamental activities and they overeat and oversleep, while others experience a struggle to do these activities.

Environmental Sensations. The sound of alarms, sirens, loud noises, burning and medicine smells or other environmental sensations may trigger the memories of the disaster and create strong anxiety. These “triggers” may be accompanied by fears that the traumatic event will be repeated.

Strained relationships. Increased conflict, such as more frequent divergences with family members and with coworkers, can occur. It might also become withdrawn, isolated or disengaged from the routine social activities.

Physical symptoms. Headaches, sickness and chest pain and other relevant aches may occur and could require medical attention. Preexisting medical conditions could be affected by disaster-related stress.

These are few common reactions experience by the people after the disaster. Generally, children and women affected by a disaster can experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that can be intense, confusing and frightening. In general, children show more rigorous distress after disasters than do adults. Gender is an important aspect within disasters. Impact of natural disasters and their consequences is gendered and socially build, which explains that women and men face different types of challenges after the natural disasters, because their responsibilities in society have been constructed differently. Women from common regions have a higher morbidity and mortality than men. They can then expect to be more vulnerable to, and more effected by a disaster. Adults who are in the age between of 40-60 are likely to be more distraught after disasters. They have more demands to secure their family and the future about their job and business.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DISASTER

Disasters and mental stress are related to a large extent; the results of disasters might have a high negative impact on the affected population. Along with the social and economic losses, the children and common man experience a mental instability which might precipitate anxiety and depression in the population. Generally, the disasters are calculated by the cost of social and economic damage, but there is no assessment to the emotional sufferings of a person undergoes post-disaster.

The psychological effects of the disaster are more drastic among children, women and dependent elderly population. Psychological distress is very common for middle class families along with socio-economic distress. Disasters are mostly unpredictable, which leaves these people in a state of astonish. They used to deny the loss and try to escape from reality. Home is a place which provides safety and security to the people. But, when the inevitable situations induced by disaster, damage home, properties other valuable assets, it leads to a feeling of insecurity in the life. There were various factors which lead to the psychological vulnerabilities of the sufferers such as the displacement of the family, death of a loved one, socio-economic loss, environmental loss, and lack of mental preparedness for disaster, disruption in the family bond, lack of social support and negative coping skills.

After any sudden disaster or chronic disaster, they become the most vulnerable population. Thus, they have special needs, which need to be taken care. The psychological impact on children due to disasters could create stress disorder, depression, anxiety, emotional distress, and sleep disorders.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support is one of the keys to recovery after any trauma, including disaster. Social support increases well-being and limits distress after mass trauma. Being connected to others makes it easier to obtain knowledge needed for disaster recovery. Through social support, you can also find:

- Practical help solving problems.
- A sense of being understood and accepted.
- Sharing of trauma experiences.
- Some comfort that what you went through and how you responded is not "abnormal."
- Shared tips about coping.

NEGATIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT

The support rendered by others can be both a risk and a resilience factor. Social support can grow weaker after disasters. This may be due to negative pressure and the members needed for social support have to get on with their own lives. After a mass trauma, social conflicts, even those that have been resolved, may again be seen. Racial, religious, ethnic, social, and tribal divisions may recur as people try to gain access to much-needed resources. In families, disagreement may arise if family members enroll them through different things in the disaster. This sets up different courses of recovery that often are not well understood among family members. Family members may also serve as distressing reminders to each other of the disaster.

RESILIENCE FACTORS

Human resilience states that a large number of survivors will naturally recover from disasters in a time period. They will move on without having severe, long-lasting mental health issues. Certain factors increase resilience after disasters.

STRATEGIES TO FOLLOW AFTER A DISASTER

Recovery takes time. It is important to allow themselves to process their circumstances and regain a sense of normalcy. There are things can do to heal and rebuild the normal life pattern.

1. Recognise when it's getting too much of signs of stress and should get extra support when things become overwhelming. Provide some extra time to get things done.
2. Release the emotions and tension by talking to someone. This can help put things into perspective. It's likely others in society are experiencing same feelings so this gives everyone an opportunity to release negative feelings and discuss practical ways to deal with the situation.
3. Make a decision of who's going to do what and when. Summaries the present financial circumstances. Having a future plan will help in better progress.

4. Taking care on basic activities like proper diet structure, exercise and sleep. Try to get back to normal routine when feel ready. Wherever possible, schedule extra time for few entertainment things and find relaxing.
5. Lean on family and friends. Strong support networks can provide emotional or practical support. Explain the needs and tell them exactly how they can help. Make a list of places to go to for help e.g. financial assistance, emotional support, etc.

CHILDREN AFTER A DISASTER

1. Give children some extra attention and reassurance.
2. Acknowledge parents own feelings about the situation and let children know its importance to share their own feelings.
3. Include children and prepare for the future plans about the wellbeing of the family.
4. Trying to get back to a normal routine life as quickly as possible. This provides a sense of security.

DEALING WITH THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF A DISASTER

- spend time with people who care
- give yourself time
- find out about the impact of trauma and what to expect
- try to keep a routine going e.g. eating, sleeping, work, study routines
- return to normal activities
- talk about how you feel about what happened when you are ready
- do things that help you relax
- set realistic goals that keep you motivated, but don't take on too much (most people in this situation talk of recovery as a journey not a sprint)
- review and reward progress – notice even the small steps
- be prepared for times when you feel you are making no progress, everyone experiences this
- talk about the ups and downs of recovery with friends, family and the health professionals involved in your care

- have a plan to maintain positive changes and plans to deal with times of stress or reminders of the trauma.

PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Awareness-raising is a basic tool for disaster preparedness and environmental protection, and it is vital to do this particularly among women as they are the capable actors in the post-disaster scenario. They, and children, can assist in strengthening community participation at the local level. Media plays a vital role in raising public awareness and influencing public perceptions, and a well-organized media campaign should be considered as a prerequisite in preparing for disasters. In certain instances the media may have to be motivated to play a proactive role in environmental issues. Many mass media campaigns on disaster preparedness have been implemented in developed and developing countries in the past several decades. The goals of these campaigns are generally to persuade individuals to either take personal steps to protect themselves, their belongings, and their environment, or to avoid environmental degradation, and the loss of lives and properties. Such campaigns have targeted most of the public. A review of available literature from developing countries has shown that mass media campaigns usually reinforce attitudes among the people.

CONCLUSION

Disasters can cause both mental and physical reactions. Being closer to the disaster and having weak social support can lead to worse recovery for the common people. On the other hand, being connected to others and being confident that can handle the results of the disaster make mental health problems less likely. Overall, human beings are resilient, and most survivors will recover from the disaster. For those with higher risk factors, self-care and seeking help are recommended.

The provided data suggests that there are a number of aspects affecting different groups of population in their adaptability. Awareness about the importance of post-intervention techniques and their applicability in the affected population has helped the victims in their recovery. The supportive technique included the individual strengths and capabilities and community-based approaches consisting of the institutions like education, health, local and national governments.

So to conclude, Disaster, not only disrupts the quality of life but also creates a significant burden of mental health conditions on individuals. Effective interventions should be given pre, peri and post-disaster period to improve the difficult mental health effects of the disaster. The psycho-social education and clinical interventions are predictable to provide better outcomes because of the integration of various effective measures. Rehabilitations campaigns should be made by keeping in mind the cultural circumstance of the individuals and the needs of the affected population.

Keep in mind that while millions of people have been directly affected by disasters, most of them do recover. Human nature is resilient, and most people have the ability to come back from a disaster. Plus, people sometimes report positive changes after disaster. They may re-think what is truly important and come to appreciate what they value most in life.

Sureshkumar OG

PhD Research Scholar in Sociology Department

Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641046

Email. ogskumar@gmail.com

Guide Name: Dr. Celine K Scaria (Celine Sunny)

REFERENCES:

1. Kreimer A. (2001) Social and economic impacts of natural disasters. International Geology Review.
2. Hermady, A.K.R. (2002). *Nilanadukkam* (Tamil version). First Publication. New Delhi - 110016 : National Book Trust, Green Park.
3. Natarajan, R. (2006). *Suravaliyum Adipaniyum* (Tamil version). First publication. Chennai: Pavai Printers (P) Ltd.
4. Peter, L. (2010). *Paruvaneelai Mattrum* (Tamil Version). Dindigul: Real Social Service Center and Wash Institution, Kodaikanal,
5. Sekar, M., Shanifan, S., Jeyakumar, C., Kishore kumar, M.A. (2005). *Tsunami Porazlivu (Tamil version)*. Chennai-5 : Vizigal publication, Sekar Printers.
6. Solanki, S.P. (2013). *Disaster Management*. First publication .New Delhi : Astha Publishers and Distributor.
7. Stephen, L.G., Sankar, G., Tamilselvan, R., and Subramanian, K. (2006). *Disaster Management, state non formal school educational, Chennai*. First Publication. Chennai .
8. Tamilnadu Science Forum. (2004). *Tsunami oru Ariviyal Parvai (Tamil version)*. Madurai: Vaigai Printers and Publications.
9. Udhyakumar, S.P. (2005). *Disaster Education training book (Tamil version)*. Transet South Asia, South Asia Council for Educational Research (SACCER Trust) Vikas Adyan Kendra and CARE Trust First publication. Chennai