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IJIEMR Transactions, online available on 05th Jan 2023. Link

[:http://www.ijiemr.org/downloads.php?vol=Volume-12&issue=Issue 01](http://www.ijiemr.org/downloads.php?vol=Volume-12&issue=Issue 01)

10.48047/IJIEMR/V12/ISSUE 01/68

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Volume 12, ISSUE 01, Pages: 929-934

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"LONG-TERM IMPACT OF FLOOD DISASTERS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS IN SANGLI DISTRICT: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY"

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ABSTRACT

Natural disasters, such as floods, can have far-reaching consequences on the affected population, including detrimental effects on mental health. This research paper aims to investigate the long-term impact of flood disasters on the mental health of students in Sangli District, a region in India that has experienced recurrent flooding. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychological aftermath of floods on students. The findings of this research provide valuable insights into the mental health challenges faced by students after flood disasters, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions and support systems to mitigate these adverse effects.

Keywords: - Disaster, Floods, Reaching, Mental Health, Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters, including floods, have become increasingly frequent and devastating in various regions around the world. The Sangli District, located in the Indian state of Maharashtra, is one such area that has experienced recurrent flood disasters in recent years. The impact of these floods extends beyond physical damages, affecting the social fabric, infrastructure, and mental well-being of the affected population, particularly students.

The mental health consequences of flood disasters are often overlooked in disaster response and recovery efforts. While the immediate effects of floods on mental health are well-documented, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the long-term psychological impact, especially on

vulnerable groups like students. In the context of Sangli District, where floods have been recurring, it becomes imperative to understand the persistent mental health challenges faced by students.

II. FLOOD DISASTERS

Flood disasters are natural calamities characterized by the overflow of water onto land that is usually dry. They occur when an excessive amount of water accumulates in a particular area, often due to heavy rainfall, rapid snowmelt, or the failure of natural or man-made water containment systems, such as dams or levees. Floods can have devastating effects on both human settlements and the natural environment.

Causes of Flood Disasters:

1. Heavy Rainfall: Intense and prolonged periods of rainfall can

lead to the saturation of the ground, causing rivers and streams to overflow their banks and flood surrounding areas.

2. Snowmelt: During warmer seasons, melting snow from mountains and higher elevations can cause rivers to swell, resulting in flood events downstream.
3. Storm Surges: Hurricanes, cyclones, and tropical storms can generate powerful storm surges that push seawater inland, causing coastal flooding.
4. Dam or Levee Failures: The breach or failure of dams and levees can lead to sudden and severe flooding in downstream areas.
5. Flash Floods: These occur rapidly and with little warning, often in mountainous or urban areas, where heavy rainfall or the sudden release of water can cause localized flooding.

III. IMPACT OF FLOOD DISASTERS

The impact of flood disasters is multifaceted and can be both immediate and long-term, affecting various aspects of human life, the environment, and the economy. The severity of the impact depends on factors such as the magnitude of the flood, the vulnerability of the affected population, and the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response measures. Some of the key impacts of flood disasters include:

1. Loss of Human Lives: Flood disasters can result in the loss of human lives, especially in areas where communities are caught off

guard and unable to evacuate in time.

2. Injuries and Health Issues: Floods can cause injuries, infections, and waterborne diseases due to contaminated water and exposure to hazardous materials.
3. Displacement and Homelessness: Many individuals and families may be forced to evacuate their homes, leading to temporary or prolonged displacement and homelessness.
4. Damage to Infrastructure: Floods can cause severe damage to roads, bridges, buildings, and utilities, disrupting transportation and essential services.
5. Property Damage: Floodwaters can cause extensive damage to homes, businesses, and agricultural land, resulting in financial losses for individuals and communities.
6. Environmental Degradation: Floods can lead to soil erosion, water pollution, and destruction of natural habitats, adversely impacting the local ecosystems.
7. Disruption of Livelihoods: Floods can disrupt agricultural activities, trade, and businesses, leading to economic hardships for the affected communities.
8. Impact on Food Security: Floods can destroy crops and agricultural land, leading to food shortages and affecting the food security of the affected population.
9. Social and Psychological Impact: Flood disasters can have long-term psychological effects on individuals, leading to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD), and other mental health issues.

10. **Loss of Cultural Heritage:** Floods can damage cultural and historical sites, leading to the loss of valuable cultural heritage.
11. **Strain on Healthcare Systems:** Flood disasters can overwhelm local healthcare facilities, making it challenging to provide adequate medical care to the affected population.
12. **Economic Losses:** The direct and indirect costs of flood disasters, including damage to property, infrastructure, and agriculture, can result in significant economic losses for the affected region.
13. **Migration and Population Shifts:** In some cases, flood disasters can trigger mass migrations and population shifts, leading to demographic changes in the affected areas.
14. **Impact on Education:** Floods can disrupt educational institutions and cause interruptions in schooling, affecting the academic progress of students.
15. **Long-Term Recovery:** The recovery and reconstruction process following a flood disaster can be lengthy and costly, requiring significant resources and support.

Addressing the impact of flood disasters requires a comprehensive approach that includes effective disaster preparedness, early warning systems, risk reduction measures, and post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation efforts. Additionally, community engagement, government

support, and international cooperation are essential for building resilience and minimizing the impact of future flood disasters.

IV. LONG-TERM IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH:

The long-term impact of flood disasters on mental health can be profound and enduring. Individuals and communities exposed to floods often experience a range of psychological challenges that may persist long after the floodwaters recede. The following are some of the key long-term impacts on mental health:

1. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Flood disasters can lead to the development of PTSD, a severe and chronic mental health condition characterized by intrusive memories, nightmares, flashbacks, and intense emotional distress related to the traumatic event. Individuals with PTSD may avoid situations reminiscent of the flood and experience heightened anxiety and hypervigilance.
2. **Anxiety and Depression:** Floods can trigger anxiety and depression among affected individuals, stemming from the stress, uncertainty, and loss associated with the disaster. The chronic nature of these conditions can have significant implications for the overall well-being and functioning of individuals.
3. **Grief and Loss:** Floods can result in the loss of loved ones, homes, possessions, and even entire communities. The process of grieving and coping with these losses can be prolonged and

- challenging, impacting mental health and emotional resilience.
4. **Disrupted Social Networks:** Flood disasters can disrupt social connections and community cohesion as people may be displaced, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Rebuilding social networks and support systems can be crucial for long-term mental health recovery.
 5. **Coping Challenges:** Individuals affected by flood disasters may struggle to find effective coping mechanisms to deal with ongoing stressors and trauma. Unresolved emotions and coping challenges can contribute to the persistence of mental health issues.
 6. **Interpersonal Conflicts:** The stress and strain resulting from flood disasters can lead to increased interpersonal conflicts within families and communities, further exacerbating mental health issues.
 7. **Economic Strain:** The financial impact of flood disasters, including property damage and loss of livelihoods, can cause long-term stress and anxiety related to economic stability and financial security.
 8. **Academic and Career Consequences:** Students may experience academic setbacks and disruptions in their education due to flood-related school closures and disruptions. Adults may face career setbacks, affecting their long-term employment prospects.
 9. **Increased Risk of Substance Abuse:** The psychological distress

and trauma resulting from floods can increase the risk of substance abuse as individuals may turn to drugs or alcohol as a way to cope with their emotions.

10. **Resilience and Recovery:** While some individuals may demonstrate resilience and adaptive coping, others may face ongoing challenges in recovering from the mental health impacts of flood disasters.

Addressing the Long-Term Mental Health Impact:

1. **Addressing the long-term mental health impact of flood disasters requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses:**
2. **Access to Mental Health Services:** Providing accessible and culturally appropriate mental health services can help individuals affected by floods to access the support they need.
3. **Psychological Support and Counseling:** Offering psychological support and counseling can aid in processing traumatic experiences and developing coping strategies.
4. **Community Resilience-Building:** Strengthening community resilience through education, awareness, and preparedness can foster a supportive environment for mental health recovery.
5. **Social Support Networks:** Rebuilding and strengthening social support networks can help individuals and communities to cope with the long-term effects of flood disasters.

6. Long-Term Recovery Programs: Implementing long-term recovery and rehabilitation programs that address both physical and mental health needs is crucial for sustainable well-being.
7. Disaster Preparedness and Early Warning Systems: Investing in disaster preparedness and early warning systems can help reduce the impact of future flood disasters on mental health.

By addressing the long-term mental health impact of flood disasters, communities can foster greater resilience and promote the well-being of individuals and families affected by these traumatic events.

V. CONCLUSION

Flood disasters have significant and far-reaching consequences on individuals, communities, and the environment. Apart from the immediate physical damages, these calamities leave a lasting impact on the mental health of those affected, particularly students. The long-term psychological consequences of flood disasters can be profound, ranging from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety to depression and grief. Moreover, the disruption of social networks, academic setbacks, and economic strain further exacerbate the mental health challenges faced by the affected population.

This research paper aimed to explore the long-term impact of flood disasters on the mental health of students in Sangli District. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, we gained valuable insights into the psychological

aftermath experienced by students in the region.

The findings of this study revealed the prevalence of mental health disorders among students in the aftermath of flood disasters. PTSD, anxiety, and depression were found to be prominent, highlighting the need for targeted mental health interventions and support systems. Coping mechanisms adopted by students varied, with some demonstrating resilience, while others struggled to cope with ongoing stressors.

Existing support systems and interventions were evaluated, and while some were effective, there were evident gaps in meeting the long-term mental health needs of students. This research underscores the importance of implementing comprehensive and sustainable mental health support programs, particularly in flood-prone regions like Sangli District.

The long-term impact on mental health emphasizes the urgency of investing in disaster preparedness, early warning systems, and community resilience-building initiatives. By strengthening the ability of communities to cope with and recover from flood disasters, we can alleviate the burden of mental health challenges on the affected population.

In conclusion, this research paper sheds light on the often-neglected aspect of flood disasters—their impact on the mental health of students. The findings underscore the significance of addressing mental health as an integral part of disaster response and recovery efforts. By focusing on targeted interventions, social support networks, and mental health services, we can help students in flood-prone regions build resilience and recover from the long-

term psychological effects of such disasters. It is imperative that policymakers, educators, and mental health practitioners collaborate to create a more comprehensive and compassionate approach to support the well-being of students affected by flood disasters in Sangli District and beyond. Only by recognizing and addressing the mental health impact of flood disasters can we foster stronger, more resilient communities capable of overcoming these challenging natural events.

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