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Assessment of Counseling and Psychosocial Support maneuvers in Natural Disasters in Hormozgan

Arezoo Zokaefar^{a*}, Shabnam Mirbeigi^a, Hamidreza Eskash^b, Marzieh Dousti^c, Alireza Sedaghatpish^d, Hosein Shafii^d

^a*Counseling and psychological affair, prevention department of state welfare organization, Iran.*

^b*Iranian Red Crescent society, secretary general advisor in disaster management, Iran.*

^c*Department of Psychology and Exceptional Children Education, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences,*

^d*Iran Hormozgan province welfare organization, Iran.*

Abstract

Purpose: The present study intended to assess the psychosocial support program in promoting peoples' readiness to respond to potential disasters and to manage the crisis through a wide network of national and local communities. **Methods:** In this descriptive study, observation and interview were used to collect data. The program includes a workshop with maneuver in Hormozgan province in 2013. **results:** The findings indicate a high motivation and unity among people, participation of key members and managers of the Incident Management System and Incident Crisis System, including children, women, elderly, and the disabled, and good coordination of organizations. **Conclusions:** According to the findings, it is recommended to hold regular educational programs in order to create and maintain readiness for disasters.

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1. Introduction

Natural disasters result in death and disability of millions of people annually. Natural disasters have a special position in all small and large incidents occurring occasionally in Iran. According to the fact that Iran is a vulnerable country in terms of natural disasters, these disasters are of noticeable importance. Iran is one of the ten disaster-prone countries and also one of the five earthquake-prone countries. 31 Out of 40 recognized natural disasters occur

* Arezoo Zokaefar. Tel.: 0-620-835-8021.

E-mail address: Zokaee2477@yahoo.com

in Iran. Psychological effects are considered as one of the destructing outcomes of natural disasters. When hygiene officials pay attention to natural disasters, they only see death and injury as the two important problems; but, the fact that the psychological outcomes of these incidents remain for survivors has often been neglected. Most countries have dealt with physical and financial outcomes of natural incidents rather than the psychosocial effects of disasters (Alizadegan, Yasamy, Aminehmaeli, Sardarpourgodarzi, Mohsenifar & Shams, 2004; Yassamy, Bagheri Yazdi, Khavai & Kafi, 2010).

Woerschling and Snyder (2004) believe that losing close relatives during disasters may cause the highest emotional injury. If this incident occurs in an unexpected natural disaster like earthquake, it will lead to longtime emotional and psychological effects. Incidents have different effects on individuals, families, and societies. These effects are not distinct and isolated. The effects of disasters on society's individuals play role also in affecting the whole society. Investigations on Bam earthquake showed that 82 percent of adults and 84 percent of adolescents suffer from psychological problems. There were also 65 percent of adults and 78 percent of adolescent who suffered from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Yasamy, Farajpur, Gudarzi, Aminehmaeli, Bahramnezhad & Mottaghipour, 2005).

Three years after Roodbar earthquake, the rate of behavioral disorders in children was estimated 60 percent (Two and a half times that of controls). 51.7 percent of these children (age 9-16) were diagnosed with PTSD. Psychosocial support system has a very important role in protecting individuals against disasters and their effects. Psychosocial disorders have bad effects on family and society. Longtime psychological destruction of family and society may be more destructive than the incidents themselves (Karami, 1994).

Natural incidents are inevitable. Therefore, it is better to minimize the mental and social effects of these incidents in individuals. National program is one of the most fundamental issues in coping with natural disasters. Such program requires collaboration of public sector and private sector. The aim of this program is to reduce the damages of disasters (Rabiee, Ardalan & Poorhoseini, 2013). All studies conducted in disaster-prone countries suggest that all these countries have independent and integrated operational chart and structure (Rezvani, 2007).

As mentioned before, macro policies have so far been focusing on the decrease of losses of life and property; and they have not paid attention to psychosocial injuries and planning supportive programs for them (Sarexitz & Pielke, 2001).

Some changes are seen in attitudes toward hazards worldwide in a way that the dominant view has changed toward enhancing the resilience against incidents. According to this view, programs for reducing disasters should be in quest of creating the characteristics of resilient societies and attending to concept of resilience (Cutter et al, 2008). Resilient societies have high social capacity in estimating and responding in terms of crisis effects. This means that function of resilient society is not merely quick crisis recovery; but, it has the capacity of training, coping, and adaptation with disasters. Therefore, resilient society should be organized in a way that it hardly be affected by crisis and the process of recovery to normal state is fast (Mayunga, 2007). Resilient society is a society that tolerates the shocks and traumas of a danger in a way that the mentioned danger does not turn to an incident; and this society has the capacity of returning to normal state during and after the incident and it has the possibility of change and adaptation after the event (Davis & Izadkhah, 2006).

Post-disaster psychosocial support programs intend to improve individuals psychologically in addition to improving them socially. Such programs include different psychological issues of affected individuals such as psychological distress and mental diseases, and also social issues such as disintegration of social networks (Dash, 2009). In these programs, in addition to disaster mental health as knowledge of helping victims and rescuers, the individuals are helped to cope with stresses of natural disasters more effectively and to adapt themselves to them. In this way, negative psychological and social outcomes of disasters are prevented (Young, Ford, Ruzek, Friedman & Gusman, 1998). Investigation of the effectiveness of psychosocial support on improving mental outcomes of incidents in 41 adolescents (age 5-15) in Sofeilan village who were present in school fire accident suggested that the subjects of experimental group showed a significant decrease in level of PTSD after 5 month (Moezi, 2007).

Psychosocial interventions include a wide range of services in mental health. Mental health refers to conditions of emotional and mental welfare in which the individual is able to have an appropriate social performance by using his/her cognitive and affective abilities. Psychosocial welfare emphasizes on the relationship between psychological dimensions of individual's experiences (thoughts, feelings, and behavior) and social life experiences (communications, customs, and culture). Dealing with mental responses of survivors (with the aim of normalizing

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