

Pakistan Flood: Prevalence of Mental Health Crisis an Alarming Situation

Pakistan Seli: Ruhsal Hastalık Krizinin Yaygınlığı Endişe Verici Bir Durum

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To the Editor,

Since the beginning of this year 2022, Pakistan was facing a major setback by highly varying weather system. First the scorching sun and deadly heat waves setting temperature to rise above 50°C and then heavy monsoon downpour submerging one-third of the country. According to UNICEF, the devastated super flood leads to killing almost 1500 people, including 528 children and affected about 16 million children. Millions of people are living under open sky and it will take around 3 to 6 months to recede. UN general secretary, have claimed that even he had never witnessed, climatic carnage at this scale (1).

The catastrophic flooding and trauma of losing home, loved ones, livelihood, source of income, crops and livestock will subject the individual to face severe depression, anxiety and they will surely deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It has been observed in previous studies that around the world within flood survivors post-traumatic depression is quite common, flood victims suffer from long term psychosocial effects such as pain, distress, learned helplessness, social dysfunction which will eventually lead to depression (2). Notable, PTSD was more profound in female survivors than male survivors, flood exposure trigger PTSD symptoms, and individual faced increased negative cognition and mood, suicidal ideation, avoidance, emotional numbness, sleep deprivation and other psychiatric comorbidities (3).

Children are most vulnerable to get affected by disaster, a study conducted earlier this year estimated that around 30.6% children/adolescent experienced PTSD after natural disaster (3) Children are more susceptible to physical, psychological and educational vulnerabilities. Emotional distress, damage to house and lifestyle mark their psychological vulnerability, poor diet, deteriorating health conditions and living in a more disease prone condition subsequently trigger their physical vulnerability while, continuous displacement, multiple relocations, late enrolments and instability of family financial conditions contributes in educational vulnerability of flood survivor children (4).

According to Survey, conducted in year 2016 (5) the level of stress, anxiety, depression and PTSD among the affectees were as figure.

Does the Government has foreseen this flood coming? Taking a beforehand precautions would have minimize the expense

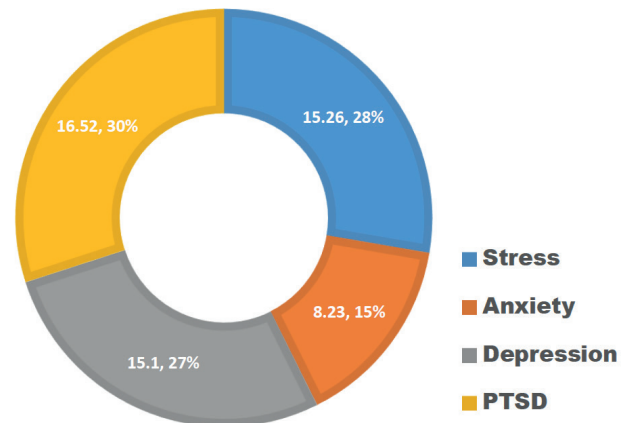


Figure: Level of stress, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder

of this flood destructions? Was educating children to act promptly during emergency could have helped them to deal with all the above mentioned vulnerabilities? The possible answer to all these questions is YES! In the report issued by IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) in 2012 had stated that global warming would further intensify the flooding and floods would be more frequent in future. Preventive step along with educating people about precaution measures at the time of emergency would help them to deal with situation and would further stabilize their mind, minimizing the risk of PTSD. Healthcare provider should be specially trained to identify and manage the underlying mental health issues within survivors. Training locals so they can recognize the symptoms of psychological illness and get help within time is necessary (6). The untreated persistence of mental conditions will negatively impact the individual thus, it is suggested Pakistan should set up specially organized medical camps and field hospitals (7) and imply Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) (8) or other rehabilitation therapies for flood victims as a remedy adapted by most of the countries round the globe for the mental stability of all the survivors and help the victims rekindle their life rising above the calamities.

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