

PTSD symptoms and recovery among different sectors of the people exposed to 2004 Tsunami in Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract

In December 26, 2004 a massive Indian Ocean Tsunami struck without warning.

In India, the state of Tamil Nadu suffered heavy damage in terms of life and property. Resilience of a community requires not only a recovery of biophysical environment but also a recovery from psychological distress. The study was conducted in two Tsunami exposed villages, Keelamoovarkarai and Sinnaperunthottam of Sirkali Block of Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu, India. Totally 25 respondents in each group consists of fisher women, fishermen, school children from fisheries community and farmers were selected and the total sample size constituted 100. The results of the tsunami exposure indicated that among the total sample 86 per cent of the respondents witnessed the tsunami waves, 57 percent hurt by the tsunami waves, 32 percent death occurred and 31 per cent family members were severely wounded and all died and wounded in the affected area were friends and acquaintances to the sample respondents. All the respondents lost their property due to tsunami. The quantum and frequency of consumption of alcohol has been increased to hundred percent of the fishermen and 52 percent among the farmers, 24 percent consumed tobacco in the form of chewing tobacco, beedi and cigarette and 6 percent of them used the pharmaceuticals to improve their health conditions. Hundred percent of the fisher women and men, 56 percent of the school children and 64 percent farmers were attending the religious functions, 52 percent of the fisher women continued meditation to relieve their mental stress. Fisher women and men opined that relatives and friends render hundred percent support when they were in trouble and 20 percent of the fishermen got remarried. Fisher women, fishermen, school children and farmers possessed 44, 88, 8, 76 percent respectively possessed cellphones, 91 percent possessed television in their home and 87 possessed house, 94 percent of the respondents gained knowledge about their future plans which they might not know before tsunami. After tsunami the villagers were trained in disaster management and hazard mapping to overcome any type of disasters including small accidents. The results of the paired t test indicated that PTSD symptoms like sleep problems, nightmares, depression, jumpiness, the need to withdraw from others, irritability, frequent mood swings, a bad conscience, a fear of places and situations and muscular tension were high immediately after tsunami and it was significantly reduced after five years.