

Role of Psychologists in Creating Resilience in Victims of Earthquake

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Generally, earthquakes are one of the most destructive natural disasters known in the world. Earthquakes are the most devastating disaster, causing a great number of casualties and major economic losses, and badly constraining the development of human society. During the last decade, resilience is the emerging field of study in trauma field. Resilience is the ability of individuals to survive, absorb, recover, or adapt to its original state after destructive traumatic event (Jiang et al., 2021). According to Bonanno (2004), “capability of adults to maintain healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning, in otherwise normal conditions”.

Studies have indicated that there is a significant association between mental health preparedness and disaster resilience building. Resilience is claimed to be the most important factor to recover from psychological trauma related to natural disaster, because it strengthens the individual's capability to cope with a stressful situation, to handle stress effectively and to relive a healthy life (Jang et al., 2018).

In the context of natural hazard, a large number of investigations has been done on resilience (Bryant, 2009; Bonanno et al, 2006; Forbes & Creamer, 2009; Paton et al.,

2000; Paton & Johnston, 2001; Prati et al., 2011; Ronan & Johnston, 2002). Besides this, a little work has done on which traits, conditions or source are required, for a person to be resilient after disaster (Bonanno et al, 2007).

Until recently, to recover from a traumatic event, all victims of disaster need mental health care. This psychological care makes them more resilient and prevent them from developing symptoms of mental illnesses. Though, to a traumatic event, most individuals show resilient reactions. Even if they exhibit the stress symptoms while coping, they are still capable of recovering on their own (Bonanno, et al, 2006, 2007). In natural disastrous events like earthquake, some scholars hypothesised that cognitive, psychological, or emotional development can be achieved due to resilience (Paton et al., 2000; Wu et al., 2013).

Role of Psychologists in Creating Resilience

The massive earthquake 2023 in Turkey and Syria not only caused death and destruction but also caused severe trauma to survivors. Around 13.5 million people were affected in Turkey as reported by Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change (Uras, 2023). Though NGOs have been working hard to provide humanitarian aid, food, clothing, and shelter but at the same time, expert psychologists are headed toward the destructive site to help victims to cope with the destructive effects (Sonumut, 2023; Uras, 2023). Studies revealed that people who experienced mass traumatic events such as massive earthquake, if they have enough interpersonal, social, and cultural support they are able to heal within six months or a year from these traumatic stressors, by using their own resilience capacity. Group

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therapy sessions by psychologists in disaster areas could accelerate and help the victims to become more resilient (Uras, 2023)

In creating resilience, psychologists can use “Richardson Resiliency Theory”. In literature according to Richardson (2002,) resiliency theory developed in three waves. In 1st wave: “task to explain those internal and external resilient attributes that help people to cope with or “bounce back” from destructive situations or traumatic events”. In 2nd wave, psychologists should provide guidance to victims to identify the scenarios in which resilient traits could be nurtured. Psychologists can help victims to cope with adversity, by identifying, enhancing, and developing the resilient characteristics or coping strategies. The 3rd wave is the actualization of the concept of resilience. Richardson defines the basic theory of resilience like “the motivational force within everyone that drives them to pursue wisdom, self-actualization, and altruism and to be in harmony with a spiritual source of strength”.

In the wake of building resilience, Harvey suggested that apart from using traditional mental health services, psychologists should use a non- conventional process that help victims to cope, grow, or adapt the aversive conditions. Harvey (2007) emphasized that elements in the social environment such as family, culture, friends, community, and large social situations affect resilience. He said that traditional mental health services will not be suitable for some people. That is why “creating public health measures to encourage healthy coping and provide comfort and assistance to people and groups who are unlikely to receive professional care” are important (Harvey, 2007).

To have the qualities of resilience within the social environment of victims, they must have people and organizational support (Harvey, 2007) which psychologists can provide them apart from using their traditional methods.

According to Harvey (2007), psychologists have to use cultural perspective to look how groups understand trauma, resilience is transactional in nature, as evidenced by attributes that are fostered, formed, and triggered by a variety of interactions between victim and their environment.

Moreover, for building resilience in the victims of natural disasters like earthquake, ten social and psychological factors were identified by Southwick and Charney (2012), which a psychologist can use only one or in combination ideally to develop resilience and boost post traumatic growth. Those ten factors are; confronting fear, be optimistic (having a half glass full approach), seek and have social support, have someone in life as a role model, have a strengthened faith, acceptance of life’s unchangeable circumstances, seeking health care, create meanings from adversity, and recognizing one’s personal responsibility in creating a sense of wellbeing. Psychologists need to teach these to victims of adversities to make them learn and practice these protective factors (Wu et al., 2013).

Contribution of Authors

Najam ul Hasan Abbasi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Sania Nasir: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing-Original draft

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