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Flooding disaster: The effect on the adolescents at Angoda Rahula College, Sri Lanka

Enoka Randeniya\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{*}

\textit{Department of Educational psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo}

Abstract

Different categories of human beings have been affected due to a range of disasters in Sri Lanka. The effects of such disasters vary according to these categories, in particular, the effect on adolescents’ reports as vital. However, there is a dearth of research with regard to this in Sri Lanka. The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of the flood disaster at Rahula College in May 2016 on adolescents in terms of physical, educational, economical and interpersonal relations and mental aspects. The randomly selected sample considered of flood disaster affected students of grade 10-11; 25 males and 25 females. The quantitative data was collected using a survey questionnaire. The survey data was triangulated with semi-structured interviews with teachers (10) and students (6) and analyzed using SPSS. Fact findings revealed that the effect in terms of physical, mental, educational, economical and interpersonal relations on both girls and boys was at considerable amount. The majority have been affected by post trauma stress disorder (PTSD), whilst the effect of social problems was high among females than males. The support received from friends, school teachers, social workers and Media recorded as powerful in resolving most of the problems encountered by adolescents due to flood disaster. This study is offered insights of professional counselors, about how to design counseling programs on coping skills for disaster affected adolescents.

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Keywords: Flood Disaster, Adolescents, Coping skills

1. Introduction

\textsuperscript{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +94714467365
\textit{E-mail address: erandiya_m@yahoo.com}
Considering the effect of a disaster, it is made a serious catastrophe for the functioning of the community or a society, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using their own resources. Duration of the disaster can range from an hourly disruption to days or weeks of ongoing disruption. Disasters can also impact the community in different levels. Disasters can take many different forms such as natural and manmade or technological in nature. Flood is included under natural disasters. Deliberated the history of flood disasters in Sri Lanka, years of 2010, 2014/15, 2016 and 2017 in 21st century, there were massive damages occurred by damaging many lives as well as resources. According to the disaster management centre in Sri Lanka, a low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal caused torrential rain to fall across Sri Lanka on 14th may 2016, causing floods and landslides which affected half a million of people. As of 25th May, the death toll was 101 with 100 missing. Students of Angoda Rahula college were also affected by the flood disaster. Different perspectives of disasters have been researched in most of the disaster affected countries. Gibbes, Mutch, Connor and Dougall (2013) conducted a research "with, by, for and about Children: lessons from disaster context” to influence on the role of children in disaster context. Sharon, Bowman and Gargi in 2016 emphasized that the necessity of disaster counselling to reduce the traumatic experiences of victims. Robert, Daniel and Kelenow (2014) revealed that the effects of chronological age of disaster victims on their responses to stress effects of natural disasters. Considering the Sri Lankan context a few researches have been carried out on different perspectives of disasters. Amarathunga, Haigh and Ingirige (2014), highlighted the process of post-disaster housing reconstruction in Sri Lanka. Gunawardhana (2007), emphasized on violence against women after the natural disaster of Tsunami in Sri Lanka. However, there appears a lack of researches conducted to identify the effect of disasters on adolescents in Sri Lanka. Thus, this study is carried out to fulfil the need of recognizing the effect of disasters on adolescents in Sri Lankan context. Furthermore, my research theme would match with the Building Resilience conference theme of ‘Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction’. Hence this study might be able to justify as a significant topic to discuss in contemporary society of Sri Lanka.

2. Materials and Methods

The main aim of this study was to identify the effect of physical, mental, educational, economical and interpersonal relations on the adolescents those who faced flood disaster at Rahula College in May, 2016. In addition, this study focuses on identifying how those adolescents coped up with obstacles after the flooding disaster, and who had supported to defeat those obstacles. Under the quantitative research paradigm, a case study was conducted and a questionnaire survey was used for data collection. The main sample had been screened at two levels: 1) among a total of 283 male and female students in grade 10/11, 96 students who faced the flooding disaster were selected for the first round of selection. 2) Randomly selected an equal number of male and female students from the selected group (60). However, only 50 students completed the questionnaires in a satisfactory level. This study was limited to only mid adolescents. Questionnaire was mainly divided in to five aspects, such as: physical, mental, educational, economical and interpersonal relations. Students were requested to rank the frequency of conditions occurred in above areas in under four levels, namely; not at all, infrequently, always (within one month) and continuously. In addition, three semi-structured open ended questions were also included in the student questionnaire. Moreover, six students and ten teachers were interviewed for the purpose of data triangulation. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the purpose of data analysis. Research ethics were considered in designing and implementing every step of the research.
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