



The Fundamental Need for Psychological First Aid as an Early Intervention to Minimize Psychological Consequences for Individuals Post-Natural Earthquake

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The misery the Turkish and Syrian people witnessed in the recent earthquake is unfathomable and horrible. Nearly a million victims were affected, with thousands dead and thousands missing. Many of them lost one or more of their families and homes and became homeless, so psychological consequences will appear with the passage of time, especially for children. An experience that harms a person physically, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically and has an adverse effect on their attitudes, behavior, or other aspects of functioning [1].

Early intervention using psychological first aid is recommended to minimize psychological consequences, especially for those people exposed previously to the COVID-19 epidemic, war, destruction, loss, and displacement, which seeks to improve coping and adaptive functioning [2]. It is worth saying that there is a need for training those exposed to earthquakes on how to use psychological first aid to provide psychosocial support and minimize psychological consequences. Thus, governments, non-governmental organizations, and institutions of mental health need to invest more time, money, and effort and must be devoted and supportive by sending practitioners to those people for progressive training and supervision systems because anyone can be trained in psychological first aid. In fact, mental health professionals such as psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses are among the most important practitioners capable of providing psychological first aid and mental health services

to survivors because those practitioners are the ones who are closest to survivors.

Why is psychological first aid deprioritized as an early intervention?

Psychological consequences are vital outcomes after a natural disaster. Many health organizations and counselors worldwide work hand in hand to reduce different mental consequences such as anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression that lead to psychosocial and economic burdens in many countries. Therefore, those organizations urge mental health practitioners, in their empirical research, to investigate the efficacy of psychological first aid, which may be considered a promising intervention to minimize the psychological consequences of natural disasters or trauma. Unfortunately, there is a gap between research findings and clinical practice. Therefore, a lot of countries and their organizations, either government or non-government, didn't have disaster plans and didn't prepare qualified individuals to carry out psychological first aid post-disaster or traumatic events. We don't forget the role of the media in spreading and increasing awareness related to psychological first aid, which should be effective. Know that it is time to focus on psychological first aid as a vital tool.

What evidence currently exists for Psychological first aid effectiveness?

Psychological first aid (PFA) is a set of supportive techniques used to lessen acute traumatic suffering and aid in both short-term and long-term adaptation in a way that respects the person's dignity, culture, and abilities [3]. It comprises a guidebook on PFA and four training modules on PFA. This guide has general information about psychological first aid. The training modules include instructions, notes, and training resources for the facilitators [4]. Following exposure to an earthquake disaster, survivors may benefit from psychological first aid training, which seeks to improve coping and adaptive functioning.

Returning to the previous literature, it reported the positive effects of psychological first aid in various global communities after certain disasters. For instance, Shah and colleagues reported that PFA is one of the vital tools in delivering psychological interventions to those who have undergone or experienced traumatic events such as the spread of coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) [5]. Bhusal & Machamas reported a positive effect of comprehensive training on psychological first aid program response during disaster events in Nepal [6]. Another study that focused on PFA application and adaptation in the context of the Southeast Asian region reported that PFA was effective [7]. Furthermore, the other study reported that psychological first aid practices applied were effective during disasters in Kakamega County, Kenya [8]. In addition, a recent study in Croatia focused on the importance of psychological crisis interventions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and earthquakes. This result was consistent with the aim of the current study [9]. Thus, psychological first aid is considered a vital and promising intervention in various global communities after disasters and traumatic events.

Who should advocate for the application of PFA as an early intervention after a natural disaster?

As mentioned above, each country plays a vital role with its organization, either government or non-government, in improving the level of awareness and the importance of applying psychological first aid. As a re-

sult, it encourages policymakers to support the promotion and implementation of psychological first aid in practice, education, and research, as well as a progressive training and supervision system. Regarding practice, mental health experts should continue to raise their voices for the expedited application of psychological first aid as an early intervention. Education should raise academic members' knowledge and competencies when dealing with students experiencing traumatic events [10]. In research, psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse researchers investigate the psychosocial factors that contribute to survivors' physical and mental health, aiming to promote their health and minimize their psychological consequences after the application of psychological first aid as early intervention.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To date, psychological first aid has failed to be an early intervention post-natural disaster, despite its effectiveness as an intervention, which estimates an increased rate of individuals with mental consequences such as anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, etc. that will appear with the passage of time after exposure to or suffering from a disaster or traumatic event. Therefore, this article tries to focus on the importance and fundamentals of using psychological first aid as an early intervention to minimize the psychological consequences mentioned above. Achieving this goal will require a radical reimagining of psychological first-aid awareness and effectiveness through the need for enough resources, assertive and supportive leadership, and a well-coordinated, empowered, and well-communicated multidisciplinary team from organizations either governmental or non-governmental.

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Conflict of Interest

None to declare.

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