PSYCHOSOCIAL FIRST AID FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT: INTERVENTION CASELETS IN DISASTER CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Social support is a known protective factor against the negative psychological impact of natural disasters. Although substantial empirical support indicates that a high level of disaster related traumatic stressor exposure and displacement independently increase the risk of psychological distress, social support reduces the risk. Social support is considered a disaster preparedness resource. It is robustly linked to improved physical and psychological health in the general population. Moreover, the influence of social support on the onset of depressive symptoms appears to be similar whether the social support is received or provided. Social support might function as a resource for disaster preparedness regardless of the size of the damage. Resilience, which is crucial for young, middle-aged, and older people to recover from adversity, is also strengthened by social support. Social assistance also increases resilience, which is crucial for adults of all ages to bounce back. This manuscript is part of the academic presentation of the corresponding author, which highlights background information about social support, theories and types of social support, a few scales to assess social support, and the lived example of disaster survivors, as well as how to enhance social support during a catastrophic situation.

Keywords: Social Support, Psychosocial Care and Disaster.

INTRODUCTION

Social support is one of the important functions of social relationships. Social support is always intended by the sender to be helpful, thus distinguishing it from intentional negative interactions (such as angry criticism, hassling, undermining). Social support means having friends and other people, including family, to turn to in times of need or crisis to give you a broader focus and positive self-image. Social support enhances quality of life and provides a buffer against adverse life events. Social support involves that you experience security and closeness, can have the opportunity to care for others, that you belong to a social network, feel respected and valued, and participate in a community with mutual obligations.

Definition of Social Support

♦ Social support is defined as the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others esteemed and valued, and part of a

social network of mutual assistance and obligations. Social support may come from a partner, relatives, friends, coworkers, social and community ties, and even a devoted pet (Wills,1991).

♦ Social support is known as a multidimensional construct. It has been defined in many ways, it has been classified into different forms (e.g., perceived social support and received social support) (Cohen et al., 2004).

♦ Social support refers to receiving emotional, intimate, material, and cognitive support from significant others (Willams et al., 2004).

THEORIES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Convoy Model: The convoy model of social support builds upon the work of and other attachment theories which emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships over the entire life course. Beginning with the infant's attachment relationship with a primary caregiver, the individual begins to learn about interpersonal relationships. The convoy model emphasizes that the individual grows up and matures, for the most part, surrounded by people who are close and important to him and her. The maturing infant is exposed first to a select few primary caregivers and then to an ever-broadening range of family and friends (Sarason et al., 2013).

The stress and coping perspective: Social support reduces the effects of stressful life events on health (i.e., acts as a stress buffer) through either the supportive actions of others (e.g., advice, reassurance) or the belief that support is available. Supportive actions are thought to enhance coping performance (Lazrus et al.,1984).

Social Cognition: Social supports are concerned primarily with the perception of support. A major premise is that once a person develops stable beliefs about the supportiveness of others. Day-to-day thoughts about social support are shaded to fit these preexisting beliefs. Social-cognitive views of social support draw from cognitive models of emotional disorders. Negative thoughts about social relations are thought to overlap with and stimulate negative thoughts about the self which turn into emotional distress (Beck et al., 1979).

Symbolic Interaction: The major premise of the symbolic interaction perspective on social support is that the regularization of social interaction, rather than the provision of support. Thus, according to the symbolic interaction perspective, our social environments directly promote health and well-being by providing people with a way of making sense of the self and the world. Social support operates by helping to create and sustain identity and self-esteem. Roles also provide a sense of identity because people use roles as basic conceptual tools in thinking about the self. Evaluations of the self are based on role performance, which is presumed to be rooted in social interactions (Johnsen et al.,2001).

TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Emotional Support	Help managing emotions such as stress, anger and depression. This support might include listening to problems and showing empathy.
Tangible Support	Help building with the practical problems, such as financial assistance, providing ride to work or help with the child care.
Informational Support	Providing information that helps solve a problem or overcome a challenge. This might include advice or information about helpful sources.
Social Needs	Fulfillment the basic needs such as love, belonging and connectedness. This helps provide feeling of security and contentment.

PERCIEVED VS RECIEVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

Perceived social support concerns the subjective evaluation of how individuals perceive friends, family members as available

to provide material, psychological and overall support during times of need whereas received support relates to the actual quantity of support received (Eagle et al.,2019).

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SOCIAL NETWORK

Social networks and social support are general terms to describe different aspects of social relationships, including those mechanisms, which may protect the individual from the negative effects of stress. The social support is offered by the part of the social network, the people around us, that are ready to help us, and on whose help we can always count. Those enjoying strong social ties appear to be at low risk of psychosocial and physical impairment, whereas a lack of social support has been found to be associated with depression, neurosis and even mortality (Doney et al., 2008).

CULTURE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

People in the more individualistic cultures may ask for social support with relatively little caution because they share the cultural assumption that individuals should proactively pursue their well-being and that others have the freedom to choose to help according to their own volition. In contrast, people in the more collectivistic cultures may be relatively more cautious about bringing personal problems to the attention of others for the purpose of enlisting their help because they share the cultural assumption that individuals should not burden their social networks and that others share the same sense of social obligation (Kim et al.,2008)

GENDER AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Gender differences in level of social support have varied. it has been suggested that females have a stronger affiliative style than males (i.e., more attachments and a wider social network) as they require greater social support for maintenance of their psychological health. Therefore, they are more vulnerable to events that affect their close emotional ties (e.g. death of spouse, marital conflict, or family conflict), and possibly are more likely to develop depression in response to them. The women seemed to need more emotional support and men tangible support (soman et al., 2016).

SCALE FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support: This scale has 12 items which assess social support in three domains: family, friend, and significant other. It is a 5-point likert scale (0 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree) (Zimet et al., 1990).

The Crisis Support Scale: This scale is used to assess social support after a crisis occurs. It has seven items which assess whether you received social support from family and friends following a traumatic event. It is a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from. 1-never to 7 always (Joseph et al., 1992).

**Social support (including emotional and instrumental support) is assessed by asking the following four questions**

1	Do you listen to someone else's concerns and complaints?	giving emotional social support
2	Do you take care of someone who is sick?	giving instrumental social support
3	Do you have someone who listens to your concerns and complaints	receiving emotional social support
4	Do you have someone who takes care of you when you are sick?	Receiving instrumental social support
	For all these questions, the possible responses were	1-None, 2-Spouse 3-Children living together,4-Children or relatives living apart, 5-neighbour, 6-Friend and 7-others
	Based on the 7 responses we assess whether individual is having social support	

(Sasaki et al.,2019)

SOCIAL SUPPORT IN DISASTER CONTEXT

Social support is a known protective factor against the negative psychological impact of natural disasters. For people who endorsed high levels of social support after Hurricane

Katrina, exposure to traumatic events did not predict depressive symptoms up to 2 years after the event. Social support may be more applicable to reducing avoidance symptoms because supporters could more easily facilitate increased engagement in activities and decreased isolation. Similarly, social support may buffer the development of arousal symptoms by encouraging or modeling emotion regulation skills (McGuire et al., 2018).
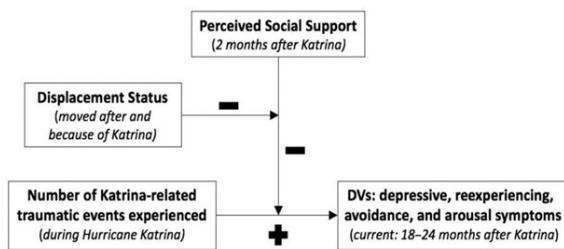
Social support may facilitate disaster recovery. Social support is strongly implicated in health and well-being. Social contacts also facilitate physical health and well-being by spreading important information about potential health hazards and opportunities for improving health that an individual may have otherwise been unaware of. These functions of advice, comfort, and information sharing are especially important within immigrant communities, whose residents are often isolated from mainstream populations by language, culture, and geography (Bui et al., 2021).

Immigrants are particularly vulnerable to disasters for a number of reasons. First, immigrants often establish enclaves in urban areas that are prone to flooding, fire, and government neglect, since prices tend to be cheaper in these areas, and many immigrants arrive with modest economic resources. Strong social support might well provide important sources of advice and comfort as families navigate the post-disaster landscape, and might well mitigate some of the negative effects of isolation, e.g., by sharing information about how to navigate unfamiliar and complex government and insurance bureaucracies (Bui et al., 2021).

Social support may also enhance disaster recovery, as suggested by evidence from Hunan, China, where recovery from a major flood 13–14 years later was associated with higher levels of social support, which was assessed at this same long-term follow-up (Bui et al., 2021).

CASELETS

A man who lost his fishing boats and nets in the Tsunami says, I do not know how I will get back my boat and nets. If the government does not provide and support for this, it will be very difficult. Earlier whenever we were in need money we usually borrowed from our neighbors and other commonly people. But now they have also lost their boats, nets and other properties. So they will not be able to help me. I feel so helpless

A woman had run away from her house and married a man whom she loved. Her family was against this marriage since the man hailed from lower caste. After four months of marriage her husband died in Tsunami. She now feels helpless as she does not know how she will lead the rest of her life. Her parents are not willing to help her take care of her as they feel that god has punished her for her wrong deeds, as she married against the wish of her family

If we go to new town for the first time and have to work or study there, we would feel insecure lonely, scared and at times fearful. If we meet some people from our background (language, religion, etc) then we would immediately feel a sense of happiness, would want to be with them, try to meet them and generally feel relieved.

SOCIAL SUPPORT INTERVENTION

During a disaster, social support gets

disrupted, as the individual not only loses his/her family members' personal belongings and property but also his/her support systems like friends, neighbors, and the community people who otherwise constitute his/her helping hands during times of need. During the initial stage of help the following things can be done as a form of social support: -

♦ Physical safety of the survivors

♦ Ensuring primary first aid

♦ Assuring them basic necessities like blankets, safe drinking water, clothing

♦ Temporary sanitation facilities near the shelters

♦ Enabling proper distribution of relief supplies

♦ Organization of health checkups for the survivors

♦ Some amount of emotional support for survivors who are in great need of it.

Further support and care can be provided for disaster victims

♦ Strengthening the support provided by the preexisting community resources (e.g., by training traditional healers, teachers, religious leaders, women leaders and other community leaders in providing support).

♦ Community participation activities that involve getting members of the community together in self-identifying and planning community activities to reduce mental and social suffering.

♦ Activities that address important social factors to reduce social suffering (income generation activities educational activities).

♦ Structured social services outside the health sector (community social network)

♦ Strengthening community networks through community activities that ensure that isolated persons come in contact with one other and thus generate mutual

support.

♦ A Psycho-social care provider can implement these strategies before a disaster.

♦ Contingency planning before the acute emergency.

♦ Assessment before intervention.

♦ Use of a long-term development perspective.

♦ Collaboration with other agencies.

♦ Provision of treatment in primary health care settings.

♦ Access to services for all.

♦ Training and supervision, and

♦ Monitoring indicators.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SOCIAL SUPPORT

Attend to your existing relationships	Reach out to friends and family. Make it a priority to maintain your most important relationships, even when other areas of your life are busy.
Increase community involvement.	Participate in hobby groups, volunteering, or religious groups. This is a great way to meet like-minded people, and build a new support system.
Attend support groups	Connect with others who are dealing with similar problems or life experiences. It can be rewarding to share your own story and provide support to others.
Use professional support.	Doctors, therapists, social workers, and other professionals can help you solve problems that are more complicated, or too difficult to tackle alone.

ROLE OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL CARE PROVIDER IN DISASTER CONTEXT

The Assessment, Crisis intervention and Trauma Treatment: the Integrative ACT Intervention Model

Assessment (A)	Assessment/Appraisal of Immediate Medical Needs, Threats to public safety and property damage Triage Assessment, Crisis Assessment, Trauma Assessment and Bio-psychosocial and Cultural Assessment
Crisis Intervention (C)	Assess Lethality, Establish Rapport, Identify Problems, Deal with Emotions, Explore Alternatives, Develop Action Plan and Follow Up and Agreement
Treatment (T)	Traumatic Stress Reaction and Posttraumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD)

(Roberts et al.,2002)

CONCLUSION

Social support is imperative to the psych-social functioning of disaster survivors. Social support may be especially helpful for reducing arousal symptoms through emotion

regulation. It has implications for how social support can be harnessed to reduce the impact of disasters on mental health outcomes, During COVID-19, social support profile moderates resilience and mental health. Mental health was buffered during COVID-19 pandemic by people with a high level of social support. Maintaining social connectedness and increasing perceived social support are crucial during disasters. The importance of family support cannot be overstated for all age groups, but especially for the elderly. Resilience, which is crucial for young, middle aged and older persons to recover from adversity, is also strengthened by social support. Social assistance also increases resilience, which is crucial for adults of all ages to bounce back.

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