

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN DISASTER SITUATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA:

A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

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Executive summary

The Asian Pacific region is very disaster prone due to its geographical position. In the last decade, many disasters have occurred in this area ranging from earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, and also man-made disasters (Raphael & Ng 2011). Southeast Asia is located in this region and there are several countries in Southeast Asia that exposed to any disaster frequently. These countries are including Indonesia and the Philippines (Singh 2012).

Since 1990 several major disasters happened in the Philippines ranging from earthquakes, floods to volcanic eruptions and hurricanes. For example, in the 7.7 richter scale catastrophic earthquake that occurred in Luzon the death toll reached 1,666 people; the Ormoc flash-flood killed 8,000 people; the eruption of Mount Pinatubo that was considered the world's most powerful eruption in the 20th century; and most recently Haiyan typhoon killed over 5000 people in 2013 (Luna 2001; Howard et al 1999; Mazumdar 2013).

As a neighboring country to the Philippines, Indonesia has several disasters that happen recently. This country is located in a pacific ring of fire area, between the Indo-Australia, the Pacific, and the Eurasia plates, so Indonesia has a high vulnerability to earthquake, volcano eruption, and tsunami (Setiawan & Viora 2006). Recorded there were 3 big disasters in last decade which claimed the lives of thousands people. These disasters are tsunami in Aceh, earthquake in Bantul, and volcano eruption in Sleman (Singh 2012).

Survivors of those disasters are at risk of developing psychological disorders ranging from mild to moderate and severe. Symptoms of moderate and severe mental disorders could also produce emotional and behavioral problems affecting personality and may lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and anxiety (Galea et al 2002; Silver et al 2002). If these psychological disorders are not treated immediately, they could lead to survivors developing suicidal tendencies. Post-disaster mitigation including psychosocial assistance therefore needs to be given to lessen the psychological effects. Large

or small scale psychosocial interventions are needed to restore mental stability of survivors for short, middle, and long-term period. In dealing with survivors with their unique cultural background, psychosocial interventions should be culturally sensitive adjusting the local cultural values.

In Asia, especially Southeast Asia, the process of rehabilitation and provision of

psychosocial support are still facing various constraints. There are two common obstacles such as limited number of mental health professionals and the limited knowledge about the provision of psychosocial support for disaster survivor (Choudury, Quraishi, and Hague 2006). Yet after the tsunami disaster in 2004 which impacted several countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia, many Asian countries begin to develop policies and guide about the provision of psychosocial interventions, including the psychosocial support as an effort for future disasters preparedness (Panyayong & Pengjuntr 2006).

In addition, cultural values and beliefs play a significant role in the diversity of psychological distress that forms symptoms formation, and people's way to seek for psychological assistance (Sue 2003). As a result, mental health professionals and organizations have to consider the local cultural values and beliefs in order to provide people with effective psychosocial support. Understanding the psychological distress expressions and unique symptoms from the survivors is essential to give appropriate and effective interventions and psychological assistance.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a critical analysis on the mental health and psychosocial support provision in the Philippines and Indonesia. In doing so, this research have three main objectives:

1. To describe strengths, weaknesses, and challenges in the process of psychosocial supports given by public and private organizations in emergency settings of disaster in the Philippines and Indonesia.
2. To compare psychosocial support practices between the Philippines and Indonesia, and to identify the good practices among these countries.
3. To learn how cultural values influence the implementation of psychosocial supports in emergency settings of disaster.

This research use IASC MHPSS guidelines as research framework in doing critical analysis. From the analysis process this research indicated that almost every function from IASC MHPSS guidelines has implemented effectively by the Philippines and Indonesia, yet not every function of IASC MHPSS guidelines has been implemented effectively by the governments and NGOs/INGOs in disaster situations in both countries. Several similarities and differences are indicated in this study also based on the IASC MHPSS guidelines as the analysis framework. Further, both countries have some good practices that can be useful as an example of a comprehensive psychosocial support implementation

Apart from the IASC MHPSS guideline, cultural values and beliefs such as kanya-kanya syndrome, pakikipakapwa, utang na loob, bahala na, pagkaya are indicated as several cultural values that have strong influences towards people's attitude and behavior in disaster situations. While in Indonesia, several cultural values such as sabar and nrimo become two important attitudes to cope disaster situations.