

Study on the Mechanism of Disaster Psychology Assistance

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Abstract This paper firstly introduces the theory of disaster psychology and analyses its concept, characters, influence factors. Then, according to periods or levels which can be like instant, short time, PTSD, the paper aims to build a mechanism of disaster psychology assistance in an effective way; and focuses on mood swing of victims. Finally, the paper puts forward suggestions and methods about how to run the mechanism, including resource integration, professional training, system improvement, and media function.

Key words Disaster; Disaster psychology; Mood swing; Mechanism of disaster psychology assistance

1 Introduction

Chinese society is full of energy and vigor as well as all kinds of uncertainty factors during the transformation period, disasters occur frequently. According to the investigation of WHO, about 20%~40% people who suffer from the disasters have the mild affective disorder, and 30%~50% will have the serious disorder after the disasters while about 20% may get serious mental disease^[1]. So strengthening the psychology assistance to turn victims into positive emotions when having the material assistance is the significant embodiment of disaster assistance task, also the double requests of both material assistance and psychology assistance.

Foreign countries researched in psychology assistance for a long time, and created four theory model, included balanced model, cognition model, psychological and social transformation cognitive model, social resources engineering model^[2]. Developed countries had established psychology aid agencies. Russia established disaster law and crisis handling mechanism after the Chernobyl event, and the United States had established scientific disaster psychological assistance system. American Disaster Mental Health Service was a part of Nation Disaster Medicare System. China had not established disaster assistance system, at present, in the area of disaster psychology assistance research; China researched few of Tangshan earthquake and Wenchuan earthquake survivors' psychological condition. China researched in disaster psychology assistance just for a short time, had not established psychology assistance system^[3].

2 Analysis of Disaster Psychology

2.1 Concept of disaster psychology

The disaster psychology is a kind of psychological phenomenon under the disaster situation as well as people's reflection to the destroying of material and social environment and the physical and mental hurt. In the disaster psychology study, the relationship among disaster, psychology and behavior acts as a center, while the disaster psychology assistance is the purpose.

2.2 Characteristics of disaster psychology

2.2.1 Objectiveness

The psychological hurt caused by disasters is the objective reality that can not be changed according to people's mind. Because disasters cause the impairment of people's real-life condition, disaster psychology emerges.

2.2.2 Synchronism

The disaster psychology emerges as soon as the disaster, a psychological stimulating source, stimulates. Moreover, people at the same time in the same area will affect each other, form the psychological "resonance" and cause the common interacting reactions.

2.2.3 Unusualness

The disaster psychology is apparently different from the usual psychology in common life. We can see these differences from the psychological reacting tendency, the reacting rhythm, the reacting mood as well as the norm and restraint of psychological reaction.

2.2.4 Bi-direction

From the behavioral effect caused by the disaster psychology reaction, the disaster psychology has both positive social function and negative social effect.

2.3 Influencing factors of disaster psychology

2.3.1 Objective factors

First is that different disaster categories cause the different impairment degree to people. Therefore, the methods of disaster psychology assistance are different. Second is that different impairment degree and scale cause different psychological effects. Third is that different time and space of disaster also cause different psychological effects^[4].

2.3.2 Subjective factors

The disaster outlook affects people's disaster psychology directly. People who have the scientific disaster outlook are often calm, objective, placid and sane while people who have the superstitious or even the foolish disaster outlook will be, to a large extent, impulse, blind and immature.

The survival capability and the physical-damage situation also affect people's disaster psychology. The survival capability is the important premise to survive after the disaster; because the basic survival capability and the survival condition was damaged to a large degree, people who suffer from the disaster would lose the confidence and courage to live and have the mental disorder or even the disaster psychology.

2.3.3 Social environment factors

The social, economic and cultural developmental level limits and affects the occurrence of disaster psychology: the higher social, economic and cultural developmental level is, the higher quality people will have and it is beneficial to produce the positive factors in disaster psychology; the better the living condition and the higher the living level is, the lower the psychological adaptive capability to disasters is and it is easier to have the disaster psychology^[5].

Positive correlation exists between the stability of the social order and social psychology and the disaster psychology: the better the social order is and the more stable the social psychology is, the occurrence of disaster psychology will be slower, lighter and weaker; otherwise, the occurrence of disaster psychology will be quicker, heavier and stronger.

3 The Process and Mood Swing of Disaster Psychology Assistance

3.1 The process of disaster psychology assistance

3.1.1 Psychology assistance of instant emergency

According to disaster psychology characters of the victims in this period, the assistance subjects should be aimed at psychological services, such as controlling moods, dispelling fears and releasing stress; the assistance object is all the victims in disaster. First, guarantee basic physiological needs of victims, in order to help them dispel instant stress disorder and rebuild sense of safety. Second, set up professional psychology assistance teams to encourage victims to talk about their issues in a friendly atmosphere. Last, carry out one-to-one crisis intervention which focuses on the issue settlement and the constrictive coping methods, not related to psychological issues in deep level.

3.1.2 Psychology assistance in short time

According to disaster psychology characters of the victims in this period, the assistance subjects should be aimed at psychological supports, such as supplying appropriate environment, helping victims gain the social system support and adapt to rescue services. First, explain the importance of psychology assistance and ensure that it can be under one's own will; set up a platform between the rescuer and the rescued to promote the psychological recovery. Second, create a good psychological counseling environment and have conversation with the rescued. Last, gain the powerful social supports.

3.1.3 Psychology assistance for PTSD

The prodromal stage of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is more than several years after disaster. According to research, there are about 1/4 victims who have lost their family probably attacked, thus a continuous psychology assistance should company with a long post-disaster period. During it, the professional psychologists need to make use of special skills for recovery of victims in certain places.

3.2 Mood swing during the process

Mood swing is an emotional response to external stimuli; it comes from whether those certain objects can be in tune with mental needs of human-beings. As the disaster psychology assistance is going on, mood of victims also rise and fall. (See Figure 1)

The first interval is a stage of disaster period. Disaster outbreaks and destroys survival conditions instantly, victims in disaster suffer from a terrible pain, both physical and mental; mood changes in a large scale, and the negative mood rise acutely to be crest.

The second interval is a primary stage of the post-disaster period. Victims in disaster start their self-

rescue; the professional organizations also supply disaster psychology assistance. Moods calm down, thus the trough exists.

The third interval is a later stage of the post-disaster period. When first-aid comes to an end, victims in disaster are disappointed: they feel painful even angry about the lack of continuous assistance from government or NGOs like psychology groups and community. Thus, their moods rise up to be the second crest. However, after the observation and a further psychological comfort from members of psychology group, moods of victims fall down again.

The fourth interval is a long-time stage of the post-disaster period. Thanks to the double-function from government and NGOs, victims in disaster who begin to recover their business or family, become calm down gradually; or they perhaps will suffer from PTSD.

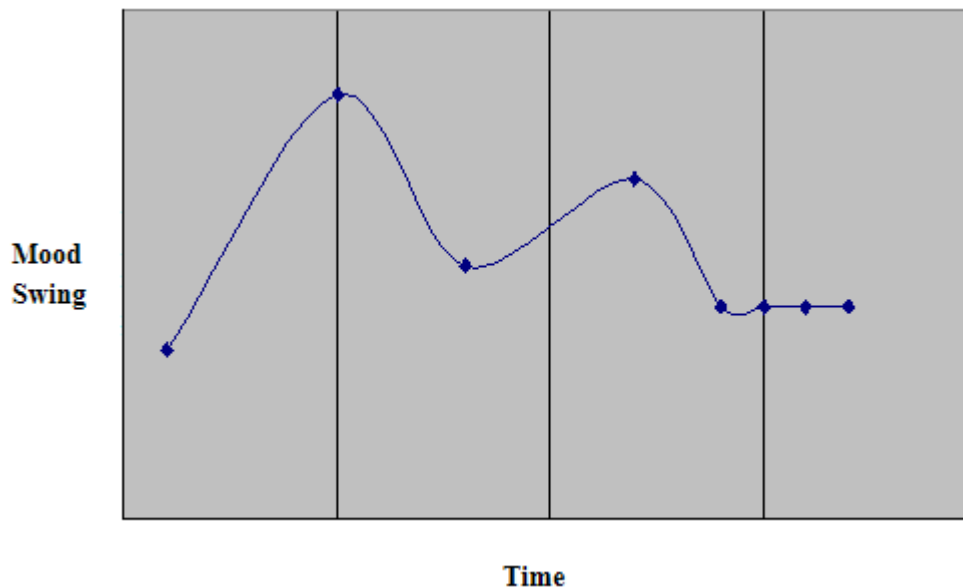


Figure 1 Mood Swing

4 Suggestions and Methods

4.1 To integrate resources and set up the coordinating mechanism

The subjects to carry out psychology assistance not only include government, but a larger number of NGOs. In the governmental organizations, emergency management agency (including crucial decision-making organizations, usual functional departments, temporary organized departments) should be set up to integrate the functions of emergency management with all classes of government and the system of all kinds of departments and their routine work. In the disaster assistance of NGOs, we should respect the individual value of the victims in disasters and make full use of their energy and initiation to settle the important issues existing in the minds of them. Different groups of victims in disasters have different individuals and groups and communities face different issues with each others. Therefore, the ways to settle issues should not be the same; we should deal with them differently according to their characters.

4.2 To set up a professional group and focus on training

Based on a powerful network of disaster psychology intervention and rescue, the national organization takes advantage of its professional support to act rapidly when faced to disasters. Usually, members of such a group work on their positions; when emergency happens, the group can run a process of psychology assistance as soon as possible. Its core consists of scientists (like psychologists) who have been trained specially; besides, assistants (like volunteers) are helpful to deal with issues. In total, the group is flexible; all members are ready enough to work for psychology assistance.

4.3 To establish and improve the system

Gradually improve and perfect the social psychology assistance laws and institutions to regulate and guarantee the effective intervention from the aspect of system. Make clear the obligation, task and legal responsibility on the aspects of psychological crisis precaution, emergency management and disaster aftercare. Guarantee from the members, organizations as well as methods to lower negative influence of disasters on the victims' psychological health. At the same time, combine the psychology

assistance with other ways in order to have the psychology assistance in time.

4.4 To emphasize the media function

Media is the main channel that provides the public with all kinds of information next to government. On one hand, try to use TV, radio, movie, material, show and competition to introduce the healthcare common sense on the disaster assistance and psychological adjustment, aiming to improve victims' cognition to natural disasters as well as self-adjustment. On the other hand, make full use of the objective and abundant information from all kind of main channels to provide comprehensive information reference in order to make people have the rational judgment when faced to disasters.

5 Conclusion

Disaster psychology assistance is a long-term and difficult task which needs the long-acting cooperation among government, enterprises, social unions as well as volunteers. This dissertation has a primary discussion of the psychology assistance in the disaster assistance from the point of the whole course of psychology assistance and comes up with the related suggestions and methods to cooperate the work of psychology assistance. In addition, put enough emphasis on the research work of psychology assistance assessment methods and assessment norms at the site of disasters, and put more investment in the scientific research as soon as possible, in order to promote the further step of our disaster-loss assessment theories.

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