



Disaster Response for Recovery

Survivors' experiences, and the use of disaster radio to promote health after natural disasters

av

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Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för medicine doktorsexamen i
hälso- och vårdvetenskap,
som kommer att försvaras offentligt
fredagen den 31 mars 2017 kl. 09.00,
HSP2, Örebro Universitet

Opponent: Docent Birgitta Wireklint Sundström
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Abstract

Karin Hugelius (2017). Disaster response for recovery: survivors' experiences, and the use of disaster radio to promote health after natural disasters. *Örebro Studies in Care Science* 69.

Disasters occur all over the world, and affect a rising number of people. The health effects of natural disasters depend on several factors present before, during, and after a disaster event. However, there is only limited knowledge of survivors' experiences, needs, and health after natural disasters. Disaster radio means a temporary radio station that broadcasts information, music, and support to the affected population. Disaster radio has the potential to function even in a severely affected area, but its effects need to be further evaluated from a health perspective. The context of this thesis was the Haiyan super typhoon that hit parts of the Philippines in November 2013.

The overall aim was to describe survivors' and health professionals' experiences during and in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, the health effects from such a disaster, and how disaster radio as a disaster response intervention can be used and evaluated from a health perspective. The thesis includes four studies using qualitative research methods, including content analysis and a phenomenological hermeneutic method, and quantitative methods with statistical analysis.

The results show that the Haiyan typhoon affected physical, psychological, and social dimensions of health. Disaster radio was used to broadcast health-related information and psychosocial support, and made a positive contribution to recovery from the perspective of the survivors. Being a health professional deployed during the disaster was an experience of being both a helper and a victim. The use of a self-selected internet-based sample recruited via Facebook for a web-based survey mitigated several practical challenges related to disaster research, but also raised questions about the generalizability of the results.

Based on the findings, the importance of an integrated physical, psychological, and social health response to natural disasters is emphasized. Also, the health care system should prepare to use disaster radio as disaster response. In addition, the results suggest that disaster training for health professionals should include personal preparation and coping strategies. Internet-based methods in disaster research need to be further evaluated.

Keywords: natural disaster, disaster response, disaster health, recovery, resilience.

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