



Intervening with the process of recovery from a traumatic life event: Case study of a child victim of a school fire disaster in India

Sujata Satapathy and Ajinder Walia

National Institute of Disaster Management, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, India

Abstract

The case analysis is based on a school fire tragedy in India, which resulted in 93 deaths and 21 grievously injured children. The case discussed here was a part of a larger study undertaken mainly to identify harmful psychological reactions and associated behaviour having long-term psychiatric implications, and to assess the suitability and appropriateness of a 10-day home-based psychosocial intervention programme. The intervention was undertaken three and half months after the incident to ensure that the major treatment of injuries was done. Different play therapy methods were applied to facilitate the ventilation of thoughts and emotions in the child. Post traumatic stress symptoms were measured with a subset of 8 items from the Impact of Events Scale (Horowitz, Wilner & Alvarez, 1979; validated by Dyregrov & Yule, 1995). Results showed remarkable reduction in the exhibition of psychosomatic symptoms, especially stress and anxiety symptoms, in the post intervention assessment. The mean score on the IES scale was also less. Parents, neighbours and relatives corroborated the behavioural change observed by the team. Reduced anxiety, apprehension, and shyness also validated the intervention. The findings highlighted the need for and significance of providing mental health care services and developing need-based psychosocial intervention programmes for children encountering such severe disasters.

Keywords

recovery, trauma, impact of events, post traumatic stress disorder, play therapy, interventions, children

-
- Contact:** Sujata Satapathy, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Disaster Management (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India), IIPA Campus, I P Estate, Outer Ring Road, New Delhi, India 110002
sujata.s@nidm.net
- Citation:** Satapathy, S. & Walia, A. (2006). Intervening with the process of recovery from a traumatic life event: Case study of a child victim of a school fire disaster in India. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 5(3), www.auseinet.com/journal/vol5iss3/satapathy.pdf
- Published by:** *Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health (Auseinet)* – www.auseinet.com/journal
Received 30 August 2005; Revised 25 October 2006; Accepted 3 November 2006