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Relationship between Social Support, Impression Management and Well-being among Flood Victims in Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relationship between social support and impression management on the well-being of flood victims in Malaysia. Literature review so far shows that there is a limited research on these variables especially in the area of disaster management in Malaysia. The paper is based on a quantitative approach by conducting a survey among flood victims. This study provides theoretical contributions to organizational communication research and the literature on disaster management context. On the other hand, the findings provide support for the effects of relationships between social support and impression management on the well-being of flood victims.

Keywords: Impression management; disaster management; social support; well-being

1. Introduction

The danger around us actually is increasing. More and more people are becoming disaster victims. More and more dollars are being spent to repair disaster-caused damages. More land areas are now polluted where tornadoes and hurricanes have visited for centuries. Cumulative consequences remain unconnected and more vulnerable to the

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extremes of nature. Many governments around the world have become alarmed at scientific evidence regarding global climate change. Extensive scientific evidence also suggests that we are intensifying the storminess of rain showers in metro areas, the number of intense downpours is increasing. With so much concrete and asphalt around, these torrents of rain are producing new dimensions to urban flooding (Drabek, 2013).

Malaysia is fortunate that it is not directly affected by serious disasters like earthquake, hurricanes, typhoon, tornadoes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. This country is also rich in water resources, receiving an abundant amount of rain every year. Even though Malaysia has seemingly sufficient water resources to meet all our needs for the foreseeable future and not too excessive as compared to other countries like Bangladesh, there are some water-related problems which have raised concerns among water engineers and the public. Flooding is the most significant natural hazard in Malaysia in terms of population affected, frequency, area extent, flood duration and social economic damage. Having 189 river basins throughout Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak, the rivers and their corridors of flood plains fulfill a variety of functions both for human use and for the natural ecosystem, i.e. they are fundamental parts of the natural, economic, and social system wherever they occur. At the same time, rivers might be the largest threat to entire corridor areas. In Malaysia, it has been estimated that at least 3.5 million people live on flood plains and are vulnerable to flood of varying probabilities (Chan, 1995). Furthermore, this figure is still increasing as rural-urban migration, land pressures, poverty and other structural forces are anticipated to exacerbate floodplain encroachment. Flood plains are also regions where a significant proportion of the country's population and much of the economic activity are concentrated. Thus, this research aimed to explore well-being of flood victims of the Pahang and Terengganu flood. The information gathered from this research is very useful in the understanding of the psychological effects of flood on the victims and the relationship between social support, impression management and well-being among flood victims.

2. Literature review

Research on natural disasters has grown in the past decade as scholars document how these acute stressors impact outcomes such as depression (Ginexi, Weihs, Simmens & Hoyt, 2000; Tyler & Hoyt, 2000) and social support (Cook & Bickman, 1999; Kaniasty & Norris, 1993). The early work in this area was more descriptive without well-defined concepts and hypotheses, but scholarship has gradually shifted toward understanding the social and psychological underpinnings of these events within advanced theoretical models (Eranen & Liebkind, 1993). Most research finds that acute events negatively impact psychological well-being (Norris et al., 2002). Disaster victims are more likely to develop psychological disorders compared to those not exposed to natural disasters (Dohrenwend, 2000). Commonly these disorders are depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Canino et al., 1990). The psychological effects of disaster impact an individual's way of thinking and feeling. Human beings are very social creatures. We want (and need) to be around others for fun, safety, healing, and growth. Traumatic events like disasters can have negative effects on this part of victims lives as well, at the very time when being isolated and alone can be most damaging. Social connection and engagement helps survivors to feel and know that they are not alone. It helps them to feel safe and normalizes their lives to some extent. Disaster workers should remember that many people feel strong social connections to their friend, relatives and so on.

The association between greater perceived social support and better physical and mental health outcomes is one of the most robust findings in health psychology (Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 2001). Although the beneficial effects of social support with regard to such outcomes have been well established (Lincoln, Chatters, & Taylor, 2005; Song & Lin, 2009), studies highlighting the absence of such positive effects are also prevalent in the literature (Latkin & Curry, 2003). These exceptions are both important and interesting, but they are not well understood. Social support is considered a coping resource—a social "fund" containing emotional and material resources from which people may draw when handling demanding and stressful circumstances (S. Cohen, 2004). Although empirical evidence generally points to the psychological benefits of supportive relationships, research on the effect of social support has also generated inconsistent findings (Beehr et al., 2003). Moreover, in several studies, rather than being generally helpful, receiving support was paradoxically found to be associated with negative outcomes (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000).

The presentation of government is very important for the flood victims' well-being (Nur

`Hafiza, Che Su & Mohd Taib, 2013).` This is because the workers are trying to help the disaster victim also try to form a good impression while trying to help the victim. Impression management refers to the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them. Because the impressions people make on others have implications for how others perceive, evaluate, and treat them, as well as for their own views of themselves, people sometimes behave in ways that will create certain impressions in others' eyes. Although only a few researchers have focused on impression management within an organizational context (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1986; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Wood & Mitchell, 1981), impression management has received considerable attention in social psychology (Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi, 1981). However, even this literature lacks a conceptual framework of IM (Friedlander & Schwartz, 1985; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985) and how impression management influence well-being.

3. Method

The method employed was this study was quantitative design. The population for this research was flood victim at negeri Pahang and Terengganu during the flood 2014. The sampling technique that has been used in this research was purposive sampling. This method required the researcher to select the sample that are known to possess a particular characteristics under investigation. Self-administered questionnaire was used as the research method. From the 800 set of questionnaires that are distributed by the researcher, only 761 set were returned. The questionnaire was classified into different parts. The first part of the questionnaire was about the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second part comprised the information about impression management. The third part of the questionnaire comprised questions about social support. Next part focused on the well-being of flood victim. Likert scale was used in the questionnaire for analysis.

4. Findings

Out of 761 respondents who took part in the study, 403 respondents were male and 358 respondents were female, which demonstrate 52.7% and 46.9 % respectively. The findings also illustrated the distribution of age range among the respondents. Most of them fall into the age group of 41 years and above old contributing to a 49% of the total sample population, followed by 138 (18.1%) of them were in the rage of 31-40 years old, 187 of the respondents were in the age range of 11-30 years old (24.5%) and 108 of respondents were in the age range of below 20 years old (14.1%). In term of race, majority of respondents which are 712 (93.2%) were Malays. This followed by 37 (4.8%) Chinese, 11 (1.4%) Indian and 1 (0.1%) others.

In term of gender and well-being, an independent samples t-test is conducted to compare the perception toward well-being. The result tabulated in table 1 indicates in there was no significance difference in score for males and females (t=1.04, p>0.05). It implies that there was no dissimilarity in term of perception toward well-being for those male and female respondents. The same analysis was conducted in order to look at the differences of the gender and impression management, and social support. The result illustrated that there is a significance difference for male and female respondents in term of impression management (t=-2.87, p<.000) and social support (t=-5.12, p<.000). The result signifies that males and females are different in term of their perception toward impression management and social support.

Table 1. T-test result

Variables	Gender	n	Mean	Std Dev	t	Sig
Well Being	Male	403	136.37	19.02	1.04	.27
	Female	358	134.94	18.96		
Impression Management	Male	403	101.94	20.12	-2.87	.00
	Female	358	105.92	17.92		
Social Support	Male	403	69.61	16.39	-5.12	.00
	Female	358	75.41	75.41		

On the other hand, a one way ANOVA between group analysis of variance is conducted in order to explore the different perception toward social support, well-being and impression management and age of the respondents.

There is a statistically significance difference at the $p < .05$ in the perception toward well-being score for the four levels of age (f=2.97, p=0.02). It means that the perception toward well-being was varied across the different levels of age among the respondents (Table 2).

Table 2. One Way ANOVA result

Variables	Age	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Social Support	Between Groups	1457.68	4	364.42	1.45	.22
	Within Groups	189750.42	756			
Well Being	Between Groups	4196.40	4	1049.10	2.97	.02
	Within Groups	358	756	756	357.16	
Impression Management	Between Groups	1258.94	4	339.73	.92	.45
	Within Groups	278822.98	756	367.09		

Table 3 summarized the correlations between perception toward well-being with social support and Impression Management. Perception toward well-being is found to be positively correlated with social support (r=.08, p<0.05). Besides, the positive correlation were also found between impression management and well- being (r=.11, p<0.01).

Table 3. Relationship between variables

Variables	r
Social Support	.08*
Impression Management	.11**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5. Discussion and conclusion

In the areas where natural disaster such as flood is a common phenomenon, the people who live in this location would be more prepared for the disaster both psychologically and physically. Thus their reactions would be less significant after the occurrence of the disaster. However, for those people who live in areas where floods are rare, the effects might be significant to them. The impacts may be greater for victims who are children, adolescence, adults and elderly who are already experiencing psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and other psychological problems. Studies also indicated that the impairments can be endured for years (Warchal & Graham, 2011).

Flood could increase the level of stress and anxiety among victims and their stress and anxiety will increase as the weather changes. The change of weather is an indicator that there will be another disaster which could expose them to more flood. Thus due to the failure and the inability to control the situation and their vulnerability to threat, the victims would show symptoms of depression, sadness, hopelessness, feeling of being overwhelmed in emotions due to lack of emotional and physical strength to cope with the situation. Very often victims find it very difficult to focus their attention on any specific thing, to complete any task and faced with the demand to be strong and independent. Also, they would develop anxieties and uncertainties as to whether their lives would ever be the same again. Thus the objective of this paper is to discuss the relationship between social support, impression management and well-being among flood victims in Malaysia.

The results showed that there were significant differences in terms of gender and impression management and social support. The analysis showed that women had a higher perception of these two variables. Gender was found not play a role in distinguishing the perception of well-being. ANOVA shows that the perception of well-being varies based on the age of respondents aged 31 years and over different perceptions of respondents aged 41 years and above. This shows that age also plays an important role in distinguishing the perception of well-being. This findings supported some of previous research which shown that gender is not a distinguishing factor for cross-cultural success. For instance, Parker and Mc Evoy (1993) showed that gender was not correlated with any of the three type of adjustment.

The study also showed a significant relationship between well-being and social support and management responses. However, the relationship obtained is positive but relatively weak. This findings is consistent with Kaniasty (2012), in his research of postdisaster social support and aid unfolding within the first 12 months after the flood, reported that the indicators of postdisaster social bitterness, operational as dissatisfaction with aid and interpersonal and community animosities and disagreements, were predictive of lower levels of social psychological well-being. He also suggested that postdisaster relief and intervention programs should consider helping survivors maintain or even argue their perceptions of being supported and their trust in the benefits of belonging to a valued social group and community. These findings are consistent with the view that that aspect of social support is important in helping the flood victims. Social support in the form of the spirit, motivation and encouragement can help boost the morale of the flood victims.

In discussing the results of the present paper, interpretations should be made with great caution on several counts. First, is related to the sample of the study. The result of this research cannot be generalized due to the fact that the sample was taken from two locations, namely Pahang and Terengganu. A second limitation of this study is that although relationship was found between independent and dependent variables, a cross-sectional study is not able to assign cause-and-effect relationship between the variables. Another limitation of this study is only a single research methodological approach, that is survey, was conducted which may not have elicited informed or accurate responses as compared to the previous study. Future research would benefit from the examination of a broader range of contexts because experiences can differ across disaster and between countries. The present study captured perceptions at a particular point in time. More longitudinal research on a variety of samples is needed to more accurately map social support, impression management and well-being. For the future research such as, researcher must increase the sample size of respondents. This research may be will emerge new findings that can extend of this current research.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between well-being, social support and impression management in Malaysia. In general, the results indicated that there was a positive relationship between the variables. Overall, flood victim who perceived that the support they received will also influence their well-being. Overall, this study has added our knowledge about the factor that affects well-being among flood victim in Malaysia. From this perspective, the researcher concludes that the social support and impression management play vital roles in well-being.

Acknowledgement

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