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Mental Health Consequences of Disasters: A Literature Review

Mental, physical, and social health are deeply interdependent, important strands of any individual's life. As is pointed out in the literature, mental and psychological issues are a potential consequence of any disaster. In some cases, not paying enough care and attention to disaster survivors' mental health during the recovery phase can result in more difficulties than the physical consequences of the disaster itself.

Exposure to disasters is increasing every year around the world. In 2005, an estimate of 162 million people were affected by disasters globally; in 2016, the estimate increased to more than 376 million. The prevalence and stress associated with disasters necessitated the development of substantial literature that identifies and describes the mental health consequences of disasters. As the disaster mental health field is evolving quickly, there is a need for in-depth literature review that describes the mental health issues of disasters.

This synthesized literature review provides a critical examination of what we know about the mental health consequences of disasters. The results of this review provide a critical perspective on what has been learned from research on the presentation, prevalence, and impact of mental disorders following disasters. It also provides a description of the current interventions that are available to deal with the various mental and psychological consequences of disasters as well as challenges, limitations, and directions for future research in disaster mental health field.