

Magnitude of Art in the Aftermath of the Lombok Earthquake

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelagic state, is prone to natural disasters because of its position within the Ring of Fire. As a nation of islands seemingly always vulnerable to natural disasters, there is a dire need for effective mental health and psychosocial interventions, including art therapy, to be developed and integrated into disaster response programs. Art therapy has been found to be an especially effective tool for working with individuals of all ages coping with a traumatic event and can potentially provide a significant reduction in symptoms of acute stress disorder (Sarid, 2010).

LOMBOK, INDONESIA
6.9 magnitude earthquake
August 5, 2018
556 casualties
7,000 injuries
over **417,000**
DISPLACED PEOPLE

Source: Social Affairs Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia (2018).

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this program evaluation is to understand the role art therapy offered for children survivors of the 2018 Lombok earthquakes during the early phase of a disaster response program.

METHODS

Research Design

Qualitative case study

Participants

Seven children ages five-to-eight

Procedure

A one-time portable open studio program was implemented. Participants were free to engage in any themes they wished. Observations and analyses of participants' artwork, creative process, interactions, and behaviors served as data.

WHAT IS ART THERAPY?

Art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.

Art therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensorimotor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change (American Art Therapy Association, 2017).

FINDINGS

Thematic analysis of the participants' artwork found evidence for the value of art therapy during the early phases of a disaster response program. All artworks represent Lombok's scenic landscapes, but three different themes emerged among them: transition, reverie, and isolation.

Themes from Artwork of Children Survivors in Lombok



Transition

acceptance of reality and need to move forward

feature landscapes with human-made structures, swaying trees, roads, and transportation



Reverie

a need to escape from their current situation

feature warm landscapes with more use of materials, especially color, and the physical parameters of the graphic surface



Isolation

a degree of detachment and needing boundaries

feature single non-human figure with constricted use of space



IMPLICATIONS

The portable open studio was an effective approach for the children at Lombok to relieve their stress and facilitate the expression of their needs when long-term mental health and psychosocial interventions were not yet available. The participants' artwork served as indicators of the children's different responses in coping with the disaster and could be utilized as a base for subsequent interventions. The limited available research demonstrates the need for further studies on the best theories and practices of mental health interventions such as art therapy in disaster response programs.

REFERENCES

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