

Oct 8 quake had more psychological impact than physical, says survey

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Srinagar, Oct 4: Nearly a year after high magnitude earthquake devastated border areas of Uri and Tangdhar, the aftereffects of the quake were more profound in the form of emotional or mental hurt than the physical hurt, says a report released by international NGO ActionAid International.

"Psychological impact of earthquake was ascertained from the affected households in the form of members suffering from various psychological problems of behaviour, physical, emotional and relational aspects," says the report titled "The Jammu and Kashmir Earthquake: Damage and Needs Assessment Report."

The report was released by the ActionAid at a function here recently. The survey was conducted by **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)**, students of Kashmir University and the volunteers of the ActionAid at Karnah, Uri and Varmul.

Behavioral aspect

Among adults, 46 percent males and 44.6 percent females indicated sleep disturbance problems. In Karnah, nearly 52 percent males and females reported sleep problems while in Uri 43 percent males and 41.4 percent females had the same problem. Many adults also reported loss of interest in life with 32 percent being male and 30 percent females.

Twenty-three percent males and 23.5 percent females reported difficulty in concentration and flashbacks. All behavioral aspect were reported about similar percentage in both males and females, a little high percentage among males. Karnah and Uri tehsils reported reactions in higher percentage in comparison to Varmul district. Nearly 30 percent of males and females reported headache and tiredness, respectively. A sizeable percentage of people elicited palpitations and irregular heartbeats (15.7 percent males and 16.6 percent females), tense muscles (7.7 percent males and 8.3 percent female), vague pain in arms, legs, chest and body (7 percent males and 8.6 percent females).

Emotional aspect

Fear, vigilance and anxiety were reported by 30 percent of males and 35 percent of females. In all three tehsils nearly one third of people reported this problem. The other emotional problems such as anger, irritability, helplessness, sadness, guilt and repeated thoughts were experienced by the members of about 20 percent of the households.

Relational disturbances among adult male and female members manifested in about 8 percent as argument and disagreement while about 5 percent of both males and females demonstrated lack of emotion and dependence on others. Too much dependence on others was found in higher percentage in Karnah tehsil (10 per cent) while only 4 percent demonstrated argument and disagreement behaviour.

In the villages of all three tehsils, most household adult members were suffering from behavioral, physical and psychological aspects that relational aspects. The reoccurrences of small tremor over a period of two months in the area and fast approaching winter made people feel more insecure, leading to many adults reporting the psychological problems.

Pre-school children

Nearly one-fourth of earthquake affected households reported that pre-school children impacted psychologically have a tendency to cry more often. Another important behaviour among the children was fear of darkness or sleeping alone (21.7 percent), helplessness (13.8 percent), easily frightened to anger (8.8 percent) and aggression (6.3 percent). In all three tehsils, the percentage of households reporting these psychological behaviour and reactions varies between 2 to four percent. The household reported that temper-tantrums behaviour was least 3.6 percent.

School-age children

This age group of children in nearly 23 percent households experienced fear of darkness, or sleeping alone problem. The school-age children exhibiting such problems varied from 21.6 percent in Varmul and 25.1 percent in Karnah tehsil. Second important problem reported among school age children was fear of recurrence of earthquake and aggression. The lack of self-competency (10.2 percent), understanding loss and becoming very anxious (9.6 percent), having nightmares and inability to sleep (8.7 percent), difficulty in following routine (7.2 percent) and school-related problems (7.3 percent) are other problems faced by school-age children in the households.

Adolescents psychological problems

Among adolescents, depression due to loss and sleeplessness was reported in 20 percent of households, respectively. In Uri tehsil, about 22 percent of adolescents suffer from depression due to loss while in Karnah about 16.8 percent reported experiencing depression. The problem of irritability was reported by 13 percent of households varying from 16.5 percent in Uri to 7.1 percent in Karnah tehsil. About 10 percent of household reported that adolescents prefer to withdraw and keep to themselves or become less communicative in all three tehsils while another 9 percent are indifferent or feel alienated. Adolescents having other problems such as anger, frustration, helplessness, aggression, inability to concentrate, and disobedience are reported in less than 10 percent households.