

10) The Impact of Natural Disasters
on Community Health and Wellbeing

Outline

1- Introduction

Natural disasters have profound impacts on community health and wellbeing. These impacts include spread of infectious diseases, surge in stress level, increased exposure to pollutants, loss of jobs, issue of mass displacement, and rise in poverty.

2- Understanding the term natural disaster and its types

3- Discussing the impacts of natural disasters on community health

3.1, Spread of infectious diseases

Evidence: 1.5 million infectious diseases related cases were reported in Pakistan after 2022 floods, WHO report.

3.2, Increase rate of mortality and injury

Evidence: Over two lac were killed in Haiti in 2010 earthquake.

3.3, Increase exposure to pollutants

Evidence: Wildfire in Los Angeles in 2025 increased particulate matter, causing a 30 per cent rise in respiratory diseases.

3.4, Surge in stress levels

Evidence: Pew study reveals that disaster survivors report increased level of stress and depression levels.

3.5, Experience sense of loss and hopelessness

Evidence: As per the study of American Journal of Psychiatry, "Disaster survivors have 9 folds increased sense of hopelessness and loss due to experiencing trauma."

4, Glancing over the impacts of natural disasters on wellbeing of community

4.1, Cause mass displacement

Evidence: 8 million people were displaced in 2022 floods in Pakistan, UN report.

4.2, Lead to loss of jobs

Evidence: Covid-19 caused around 114 million job losses worldwide as per ILO.

4.3, Rise in poverty

Evidence: The World Bank reports that disaster push 26 million people into poverty annually.

4.4, Increase in gender-based vulnerabilities

Evidence: There is 40 per cent rise in gender-based violence in post disaster camps globally, UN Women report.

4.5, Increase in community conflicts

Evidence, The community conflicts in Sahel increased three folds due to drought-driven resource scarcity.

5, Chalking out the solutions to overcome the impacts of natural disaster on community health and wellbeing

5.1) To strengthen disaster preparedness

5.2) To provide mental support to survivors

5.3) To improve healthcare system

5.4) To devise plans for socioeconomic recovery.

6, Conclusion



The Essay

Natural disasters are one of the pressing issues of the modern world. In fact, with every passing year, the frequency of natural disasters are increasing, consequently impacting every arena of life. As per UNEP report, "In 2024, around 416 natural disasters took place globally, impacting millions of people." So, with this unprecedented increase in natural disasters, they profoundly impact the health and wellbeing of community. The impact of natural disasters on community health include spread of infectious diseases, increased exposure to pollutants, surge in stress levels, and increase in mortality and injury rate. To further aggravate

the situation, natural disasters also impact the wellbeing of a community. These impacts are ranging from leading to mass displacement to rise in poverty and increase in community conflicts to disruption of jobs of millions. Notwithstanding, the grim state of impacts of natural disaster can be tackled timely by taking some programmatic solutions. So, by strengthening disaster preparedness, improving healthcare system, and devising plan for ensuring socioeconomic recovery, the impacts of natural disasters on community health and wellbeing can be overcome. This essay discusses the grave impacts of natural disaster on community health and wellbeing and suggest some sagacious measures to overcome these impacts.

Before delving deep into the essay's main topic, it is pertinent to comprehend the term natural disaster and understand its type. Natural disaster refers to any calamitous occurrence generated by natural phenomena rather than human-driven, causing profound human loss, destruction

of natural environment, and loss of infrastructure, according to Britannica. As far as the types of natural disaster are concerned, they include floods, landsliding, volcanic eruption, wild fires, drought, hurricanes, cyclones, and famines. These types can be weather or climate driven natural disasters.

To begin with, natural disasters have grave impacts on the health of community. First, natural disasters influence the health of community by spreading various infectious diseases. These diseases ultimately impact human health in multiple ways. To illustrate, due to 2022 drastic floods in Pakistan, over 1.5 million cases related to infectious diseases were reported in the country as per the report of World Health Organization. Sadly, the report underscores the grim situation of health related issues that are caused due to natural disasters, consequently impacting the overall health of a community. To conclude, it is apt to say that natural disasters profoundly impact the health of a community and the spread of infectious diseases due to

natural disasters is the glaring evidence of it.

Going down the ladder, natural disasters impact the health of a community by increasing the injury and mortality rate, making the situation worse. Due to natural disasters people get various serious injuries and owing to shortage of medical care, their death occur. Such as, in 2010 earthquake in Haiti, over two lac deaths were reported, millions were injured and buried under the rubble. Unfortunately, any type of natural disaster, like floods and earthquake makes the state of health of a community further depressing as people get multiple severe injuries and due to emergency situation can not get proper care, leading to death. To put simply, the impact of natural disasters on the health of community is grave as it increase the rate of injury and mortality in disaster-prone areas, leaving people in a vulnerable condition of health related issues.

Another defining impact of natural disasters on the health of a community is that it increases the exposure of people to deadliest pollutants, which give birth to many diseases, ultimately threatening the very existence of human life. For example, due to wildfire in Los Angeles in 2025, the quantity of particulate matter increased in the atmosphere, resulting in 30 per cent increase in respiratory diseases. Notably, this illustration depicts how natural disasters create profound threats to human life by exposing them to life-threatening pollutants. Hence, the impact of natural disasters on human health can not be overshadowed as they increase human exposure to various poisonous pollutants, deteriorating the health situation of a community.

In addition, natural disasters further make the state of the health of community sorry by surging the stress levels. The survivors of the disasters have increased level of depression and anxiety due

to all the trauma, they have gone through at the times of disasters. A study of Pew Research centre reveals that the stress and depression levels among disaster survivors are reportedly high as compare to people who have not gone through disaster like situation. Sadly, the natural disasters impact not only the physical health of humans but also influence mental health due to the drastic situations happen during the times of disasters. Thus, the health of a community profoundly impacts due to natural disasters as disaster-situations boost the stress and depression levels of the survivors → damaging the mental state of the people.

Besides, natural disasters drastically impact the health of a community by inculcating a sense of hopelessness among them. Due to significant loss, people become hopeless and does not see any ray of hope by which their lives will again come back on

track. The American Journal of Psychiatry reveals that disaster survivors have two folds increased feeling of hopelessness due to expressing such horrendous conditions. Consequently, the depressing and stark conditions during disasters make people hopeless, disrupting their mental wellbeing and peace of mind. In short, among various impacts of natural disasters on every landscape of life, one such impact of them is also on the health of a community since it compel people to develop a sense of loss and hopelessness.

Moving towards the impact of natural disasters on the wellbeing of a community, the natural disasters destroy the wellbeing by causing a mass displacement of people. Due to natural disasters, people are compelled to leave the disaster-stricken areas in order to save their lives. For instance, during 2022 floods in Pakistan, 8 million people were displaced as per ^{the} UN report. Unfortunately, the report is a glaring evidence, which

shows how people leave their homes and other valuables due to natural disasters just to save their lives. In conclusion, natural disasters push the wellbeing of a community at verge by causing profound mass displacement, making people vulnerable.

Furthermore, natural disasters also impact the very wellbeing of a community by leading a significant disruption and loss in jobs. The natural disasters destroy major infrastructure, schools, and buildings, which ultimately make people jobless working in these places. One such example of it is the loss of 114 millions jobs worldwide during Covid-19.

Verily, natural disasters have great potential to make people jobless, leaving people vulnerable. To put it in simple words, the impact of natural disasters on the wellbeing of a community is evident in its daunting potential of leading people towards joblessness.

To make the situation further aggravated, natural disasters undermine the wellbeing of a community by rising poverty. As natural disasters destroy all resources with themselves, people in disaster-prone areas face severe shortage of necessary resources, which ultimately give rise to poverty. According to the report of the World Bank, "Disaster push 26 million people into poverty annually." Regrettably, natural disasters cause a sorry state of resource scarcity that automatically compel to live in poverty. Thus, natural disasters are the culprits behind rise of poverty, automatically influencing the wellbeing of a community reeling with the disasters.

Likewise, natural disasters disturb the wellbeing of a community by increasing the risks of gender-based vulnerabilities. Due to facing traumatic conditions, people lose their mental peace, properties, assets, and other valuables, which make them mentally depressed and due to such depressing state of affairs, violence against women and child increases, especially in patriarchal

societies. For example, the UN Women report says that there is 40 per cent rise in gender-based violence in post-disaster camps have been reported globally. This sorry state of gender vulnerabilities is the outcome of natural disasters. So, natural disasters play pressing role in destroying the wellbeing of a community by giving rise to gender-based vulnerabilities.

Last but not least, natural disasters also impact the wellbeing of a community by causing conflicts in society over limited resources. Natural disasters are direct cause of food shortage and basic facilities. When resources become scarce, every member of society fights for its survival, which ultimately leads to conflict like situation. Namely, the community conflicts in Sahel increased three folds due to drought-driven resource scarcity. In times of disaster, everyone tries to store maximum resources for its survival, and as a result, people fight to get their part. Therefore, the impact of natural disasters on the wellbeing of a community can be seen in the

increasing conflicts in a community, automatically destroying peace of society.

Nevertheless, this pressing issue can be tackled by some pragmatic solutions. First, it is the need of the hour to strengthen the disaster preparedness. By doing so, many people will be immune to get impacted by the natural disasters. In this regard, the disaster preparedness models of Japan and Brazil are notable examples. As these countries are highly prone to natural disasters, like floods and tsunamis, they worked on their disaster management systems and strengthen their preparedness by engaging community members, working on capacity building, and using modern AI-driven technologies. Thus, by following such great models, the impacts of natural disasters can be overcome through strong preparedness, resulting in flourishing and peaceful society.

Second, the impact of natural disasters on health and wellbeing of a community can be hindered by providing mental support to the survivors of disasters.

Due to traumatic situation during disasters, people become mentally disturbed and physically weak, resulting in deterioration in their health. Therefore, they need proper professional help and counselling to recover from trauma they face during these disasters. In this manner, the impact of natural disasters on health of community can be reduced.

Moreover, due to extreme health related impacts of natural disasters, it is required to buttress the healthcare system to timely and effectively provide assistance to the vulnerables. For example mobile healthcare systems and emergency medical camps in disaster-stricken areas can be proved beneficial. By ensuring these steps regarding healthcare, the system can be improved, and people will be served diligently and timely. It will also decrease the mortality and injury rate at the times of disasters. Thus, improving healthcare system can decrease the impact of natural disasters on

health and wellbeing of a community.

Lastly, it is pertinent to devise proper plans and policies that can ensure socioeconomic recovery of people for undermining the impacts of natural disasters. In such plans, there would be proper zoning of disaster prone areas, intensity of upcoming disaster, and requirement of resources to meet the needs of people. Therefore, devising a proper plan can help in diminishing the impacts of natural disasters to some extent on health and wellbeing of community.

In conclusion, natural disasters have profound impact on the health and wellbeing of communities. On health, natural disasters impact it by causing widespread of infection diseases, increasing exposure to pollutants, surging stress level, and inculcating feeling of hopelessness. In the realm of wellbeing of a community, the impact of natural disasters ranges from disruption of job, rise in poverty,

cause of mass displacement, and increase in community conflicts. However, the issue can be cured by taking some significant measures, namely devising a proper policies, strengthening disaster preparedness, improving healthcare system, and providing mental support to the survivors to recover from the trauma.

