

Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy

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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Adolescents of Pakistan: 2 Years Following the 2022 Torrential Flood

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Objective: This study aimed to investigate the prevalence and predictors of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among adolescents in Taunsa City, District Dera Ghazi Khan, Southern Punjab, Pakistan, following the catastrophic 2022 torrential flood. **Method:** A total of 450 adolescents were recruited using a multistage sampling method and the Krejcie and Morgan technique. **Results:** Findings revealed a substantial psychological impact of the flood, with 44.2% reporting moderate PTSD symptoms and 33.8% severe. Using Foa's cutoff of 31, 85.3% met or exceeded the clinical threshold. Hierarchical regression showed that gender significantly predicted PTSD symptoms in Step 1 ($\beta = .22, p < .001, R^2 = .05$) but became nonsignificant after adding other predictors. Anger ($\beta = .51, p < .001$) and experiential avoidance ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) were significant positive predictors, with the final model explaining 34% of the variance. Age was not significant ($\beta = .01, p > .05$), likely due to the narrow age range of 12–18 years. **Conclusions:** The study underscores the importance of integrating these psychological factors into counseling and therapeutic strategies to support PTSD recovery among flood-affected adolescents. These findings emphasize the urgency of single-session therapies as the first psychological aid in postdisaster mental health support.

Clinical Impact Statement

This study shows that many adolescents affected by the 2022 flood in Pakistan are struggling with posttraumatic stress disorder, especially girls. It also highlights that avoidance and anger are the key predictors of their symptoms. These findings remind mental health professionals to screen early, consider gender differences, and use brief, targeted therapies like single-session acceptance and commitment therapy to help teens face their emotions instead of avoiding them. Acceptance and commitment therapy can support emotional processing, reduce distress, and build resilience. Tailoring interventions in this way can make postdisaster care more effective and accessible for vulnerable adolescents.

Keywords: posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD, torrential flood, adolescents

Disaster Context

Torrential floods are increasing globally due to climate change and urbanization (M. Ali & Mahmood, 2024). Climate change intensifies these floods by raising atmospheric temperatures, which enables the air to hold more moisture, resulting in heavier rainfall (Acharya et al., 2018; Drake et al., 2026; Fowler et al., 2021; Flower et al., 2021). Urbanization further exacerbates flood risks by transforming natural landscapes into urban areas, replacing permeable surfaces with impervious materials, such as asphalt and concrete. This reduces groundwater absorption and overwhelms drainage systems (Dutta et al., 2021; Zia & Shirazi, 2021). Geospatial assessments confirm that both climate change and urbanization are key contributors to the increasing severity of floods worldwide (Vorobevskii et al., 2022).

According to the geography of Pakistan, the country is divided into five provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly Sarhad), and Gilgit Baltistan (Butt, 2019; S. U. Khan &

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