Post Trauma Counseling for Early Childhood Teachers and Tutors
(An Experiment Study in Central Sulawesi)

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Abstract
Natural disasters occurring in Central Sulawesi in 2018 has caused psychological trauma on people affected, including early childhood (EC) teachers and tutors. Related to this grief, the current study aims at examining the effectiveness of post trauma counseling in developing capability of EC teachers and tutors in managing stress caused by natural disasters. Employing a quasi-experiment and pretest-posttest control group design, this study involved 23 EC teachers and tutors in each experiment and control group. Data were collected through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder developed by Scott and Stradling (2006). Analysis of Mann Whitney indicated that μ₁ = 0.005 > α = 0.05. This showed that post trauma counseling was effective in developing the capability of EC teachers and tutors in managing stress resulted from natural disasters. Further analysis per aspect showed that except for aspects of hope and isolation, post trauma counseling was effective in developing aspects of event re-experienced, avoidance, arousal, and life disrupted. These findings recommended that counselors were able to use post trauma counseling to help casualties of natural disaster to develop capability in managing their stress. Meanwhile, further study should analyze reasons of the ineffectiveness of post trauma counseling in developing aspects of hope and isolation.

Keywords: natural disaster-caused stress, post trauma counseling, stress management

Introduction
Natural disasters of earth quake, liquefaction, and tsunami which hit Central Sulawesi region on September 28, 2018 caused a huge material lost. As a result of this calamity, more than 65,000 houses were destroyed and other social and economy infrastructures were also damaged, causing a total financial loss of 18.48 trillion rupiahs. This amount of loss consists of 9.41 trillion rupiahs of housing or residence, 1.05 trillion rupiahs of economy sector, 3.37 trillions of social sector, and the remaining 0.44 trillion of inter-sectoral damage. In addition to material loss, this calamity also caused physical and psychological impacts on the affected people. This sudden and unimaginable disaster caused huge trauma for these people in this region, including Early Childhood teachers and tutors. Considering the importance of these groups of people in human index development, it is necessary to identity how they can survive from the aftermath of disaster and resume their teaching profession.

By end of 2018, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), identified as many as 324 EC teachers and tutors who were badly affected by the earth quake, liquefaction, and tsunami in this Central Sulawesi region. This condition happened due to their inability to cope and adapt with traumatic experiences (Hentges& Lynch 2009). Consequently, stress due to these natural disasters then changed to stressor (Buss, Warren, & Horton, 2015). This condition is what Scott and Stradling (2015) called as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or anxiety experienced after traumatic experience (Rusmana, 2009). PTSD emerges as psychological trauma and emotional disturbance that individuals possess after experiencing tragic or extreme incidents (Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller; Schiraldi, 2000).

Since 2000, the American Psychiatric Association has formally categorized PTSD as a trauma disorder with specific indicators and characteristics different from those of other traumas. Some scholars such as Scott and Stradling (2006), Rusmana (2009), and Jones, Hughes, and Unterstaller...
(2001) have identified six criteria of PTSD, which include (1) event re-experienced, a condition where casualties still feel and remember the disaster which hit them; (2) hopeless, a condition of loss of life expectancy; (3) avoidance symptom, in which casualties manage to avoid symptoms similar to that caused by previous traumatic disaster; (4) arousal symptom, a condition where individuals or casualties experience increasing tension; (5) self-isolation, where individuals isolate themselves; and (6) life disrupted, a condition where individuals feel powerless due to traumatic experience or disaster.

Furthermore, when EC teachers and tutors cannot manage post disaster trauma, they will experience lack of control syndrom (Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller, 2001), that is, making a fatal mistake in self-control. As a consequence of this, they may find difficulties in performing their duties as teachers or tutors. The inability of these teachers and tutors in managing post disaster trauma may lead to other deep and lengthy failures, which are often irreversible (Green, 2004). When this happens, they will face difficulties in performing their routine activities of educating young children, let alone answer the challenge of Industry Revolution 4.0. This means that EC teachers and tutors have to possess the ability to manage and handle post disaster trauma or stress. Comparing with the results of previous studies on PTSD in different contexts (Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller, 2001; Bisson et al., 2007; Hentges & Lynch, 2009; Buss, Warren, & Horton, 2015), the EC teachers and tutors severely affected by natural disasters in Central Sulawesi may need need relevant psychological supports of PTSD.

Based on this review studies on PTSD and in relation to the natural disaster in Central Sulawesi, this study examines the effectiveness of post trauma counselling in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing natural disaster-caused stress syndrome. Is post trauma counselling effective in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing their post trauma stress due to natural disaster in Central Sulawesi? In this study, post trauma counselling is defined and understood as a series of counselling activities to support these victim teachers in developing their ability to manage post trauma stress. The activities include a sequence of strategic group activities such as relaxation technique, Socratic dialogue, play therapy and out-bond activities.

**Method**

The quantitative study uses quasi experimental design with pretest-posttest control group (Happner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008), involving 46 EC teachers and tutors in both control and experiment groups (32 participants for each group). The experiment group received post trauma stress counselling whereas the control group did not receive this counselling activities. Pretest and posttest were administered to both experiment and control groups to identify the influence of independent variable (X) as reflected in difference in dependent variable (Y), particularly $O_2$ and $O_4$.

The study design is shown below.

\[ R_1 \quad O_1 \quad X \quad O_2 \]
\[ R_2 \quad O_3 \quad - \quad O_4 \]

The research samples (46 participants) were randomly (random assignment) selected from 324 population of EC teachers and tutors affected by the natural disaster in the region. Data of the study were collected from an instrument, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) developed by Scott & Stradling (2006) which has been tested for validity and reliability in Indonesian context. The content validity of PTSD was tested by expert judgement involving three trauma counsellors Whereas empirical validity uses Point-Biserial Correlation with 95% trust level. These two tests show that all PTSD items are valid. The index reliability of PTSD is 0.822 (high) based on Guttman Split-Half Coefficient. Thus, the PTSD instrument is valid and reliable to assess post-trauma disaster in Indonesia, which includes event re-experienced, avoidance, arousal, life disrupted, hope, and isolation. To test the effectiveness of post trauma counselling in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing their post trauma stress, Mann Whitney U was also used in this study.
Result and Discussion

Results of post trauma counselling test in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing stress impacted by natural disaster is shown in Table 1 below.

| Table 1. The test results of Mean Rank Difference between Experiment and Control Groups through Mann-Whitney U |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable/Aspects | Mean Rank | Mann-Whitney U | P 1-tailed | P 2-tailed | Interpretation |
| **Capability in Managing Natural Disasters-Caused Stress** | | | | |
| Event re-experienced | 27.24 | 19.76 | 7.48 | 178.500 | 0.010 | 0.005 | Significant |
| Hopeless | 31.67 | 15.33 | -16.34 | 76.500 | 0.002 | 0.001 | Significant |
| Avoidance symptom | 26.52 | 20.48 | 6.04 | 195.000 | 0.002 | 0.001 | Significant |
| Arousal symptom | 29.52 | 17.48 | 12.04 | 126.000 | 0.004 | 0.002 | Significant |
| Self isolation | 16.98 | 30.02 | -13.04 | 114.500 | 1.946 | 0.973 | Not Significant |
| Life disrupted | 23.57 | 23.43 | 0.14 | 263.000 | 0.002 | 0.001 | Significant |

Note: Criteria for interpretation α = 0.05

Mann Whitney U test yields \( \mu_2 = 0.005 \). With \( \mu > 0.05 \), Ho was rejected. Therefore, post trauma counselling is considered effective in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing their stress caused by natural disaster. In other words, it is shown that after receiving post trauma counselling activities, these teachers and tutors who were badly affected by the natural disaster in Central Sulawesi experienced an increasing ability in managing stress caused by the disaster. Furthermore, individual aspect analysis also shows that the participating teachers could manage their stress in four aspects (1, 3, 4 and 6); experienced, avoidance symptom, arousal symptom, dan life disrupted; but found difficulties in aspects of hopelessness and self isolation.

The results above are also in line with those of the previous studies by Hentges & Lynch, 2009; Benish, Imel, & Wampold, 2007; Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller, 2001; and Ehlers et al., 2005) who found that post trauma counselling could help individuals affected by the natural disaster as the participants of the study have experienced in Central Sulawesi. This effectiveness was achieved because post trauma counseling focuses on emotional regulation and the ability of self-control development (Michelfelder & Swoboda, 2012). Besides, post trauma counselling also developed counselees’ ability in emotional control so that they do not make fatal error in managing their emotional feelings (Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller, 2001). When the participants can regulate and control their emotions, and themselves, they will be able to cope with disaster-impacted stress. With this ability, they can do self-help in managing their post trauma stress so that they are not trapped in some phenomena of event re-experienced, hopeless, avoidance symptom, arousal symptom, self isolation dan life disrupted (Scott & Stradling, 2006). They can even release themselves from the control of these six aspects of post trauma stress, which, sometimes are irreversible (Gree, 2004; Frazier et al., 2009). It is further expected that these EC teachers and tutors have strong resilience ability, that is, the capability of individuals to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity, or risk (Michelfelder & Swoboda, 2012, p. 20).

As the table above shows, post trauma counselling is effective in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing post trauma stress aspects which include event re-experienced,
avoidance symptom, arousal symptom, and life disrupted. This means that the experiment group have shown significant improvement in managing stress due to natural disaster in these aspects. Event re-experienced event is a condition in which disaster victims still feel the disaster as indicated by (1) the emergence of reimagining past experience of disaster (image, thought, and perception), (2) nightmare caused by the past natural disaster experienced, (3) the emergence of traumatic behaviors such as illusion, hallucination, and disassociation.

Avoidance system is a behavior where victims manage to avoid similar incident of disaster. This is indicated by (1) avoiding thought and feeling which can remind the traumatic experience, (2) avoiding activities in the place or people associated with the past disaster, (3) decreasing interest in participation of previously pleasing activities. Arousal system, an increasing tension individuals experience as indicated by (1) sleep deprivation, (2) concentration problem, (3) over vigilance, (4) low memory and memorization, (5) over response to shocking experience. Meanwhile, life disrupted is a disorder in which individuals feel powerless, as indicated by (1) becoming hopeless, (2) blaming God, (3) Questioning belief (Buss, Warren, & Horton, 2015; Scott & Stradling, 2006; Rusmana, 2009; dan Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller, 2001).

However, post trauma counselling is not considered effective in developing the ability of the participating EC teachers and students in two other aspects (hopelessness and self-isolation). This means that after taking part in the counselling program, the participants did not improve their ability in managing post trauma stress so that they become hopeless and tend to isolate themselves from social circles. Hopeless is a condition in which individuals lost life expectation as indicated by (1) low future life expectancy, (2) no sense of belongingness. Finally, self-isolation is a condition where individuals manage to isolate themselves from social interactions as indicated by (1) extreme confusion, (2) withdrawal from social circles. (Buss, Warren, & Horton, 2015; Scott & Stradling, 2006). It seems that to improve the participants’ ability in managing stress in these two aspects, they need to be involved in more intensive counselling activities and use of other strategies. Supporting this finding, Jones, Hughes & Unterstaller (2001) propose the use of cognitive behavior counselling as it can develop appropriate mindset about hopelessness and self-isolation. The strategy should also provide participants with insights on the importance of future life and openness for others.

Conclusions

In general, post trauma stress disorder (PTSD) is considered effective in developing the ability of EC teachers and tutors in managing disaster-caused stress. This PTSD is specifically considered effective in developing EC teachers and tutors in terms of re-experienced event, avoidance symptom, arousal symptom, and life disrupted so that they can manage stress related to (1) re-experiencing the earthquake, liquefaction, and tsunami, (2) symptom of avoiding phenomena of earthquake, liquefaction, and tsunami, (3) emotional tension, and (4) life disruption which causes powerlessness. However, this PTSD cannot successfully develop EC teachers and tutors in developing their ability to manage stress related to aspects of hopelessness and self-isolation so that the participants still show low hope and have confusion in facing their future, leading to their social withdrawal.

Findings also recommend that the participating EC teachers and tutors have contextual adjustment so that they can use the PTSD to help victims of this natural disaster to develop their ability to manage their post trauma stress disorder. Future researchers should also explore the ineffectiveness of PTSD in developing EC teachers and tutors in the two aforementioned aspects; hopelessness and self-isolation.

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References


