



Disasters and Trauma, That Are Harmful to Children and Adolescents, Are All Too Common in the Real World and the Digital World

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Currently, there are ongoing conflicts in the world, where-in pregnant women, children, and adolescents being the most at risk [1]. Research on the impact of trauma and disasters on young individuals has become a significant focal point since the publication of studies on the lasting effects of adverse childhood experiences in 1998 and the events of 9/11 [2].

Children and adolescents go through different developmental stages and often struggle to fully comprehend what is happening around them [3]. Consequently, they may find it challenging to properly identify and cope with the impact of trauma and disasters, requiring assistance from caregivers [4]. Research findings suggest that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in young individuals is not easily resolved on its own [5].

Hence, it is crucial to develop effective strategies to prevent and address trauma, which can vary depending on a child's age and developmental stage of the child [6]. Childhood trauma can adversely affect neurodevelopment and disrupt the hormonal and immunological balance, leading to illness [7]. This special publication explores the link between childhood trauma and cognitive function in adulthood [8].

It is widely recognized and under investigation that adverse childhood experiences impact both mental and physical health of adults [2]. These experiences include child abuse, neglect, sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. These effects stem from the interactions between caregivers and children, and a disaster is an event that significantly affects society as a whole.

Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, and man-made disasters, such as wars, are unforeseen events that can suddenly disrupt an individual's life and have a significant impact. While adults are initially affected, children and adolescents are affected even more significantly because they are unable

to survive independently without the support of a caregiver.

Disasters can diminish adults' abilities to care for children and teenagers, leading to emotional and physical neglect. Consequently, young individuals may experience long-lasting consequences in their future and develop pessimistic views of themselves, their environment, and what lies ahead [9].

Therefore, a nation facing historical trauma and social disasters should prioritize the mental well-being of children and teenagers. This is because adults who have experienced adverse childhood experiences due to historical trauma may struggle to properly care for their children and adolescents who are dealing with the lingering effects of trauma and disaster.

South Korea has a history of trauma and several recent social disasters [10,11]. Following the 2014 Ferry Sewol disaster in South Korea, there has been a growing public interest in PTSD [12]. It is now widely recognized that experts should assist children and teenagers after they have experienced trauma. Disasters with widely circulated videos, such as the 2022 Itaewon disaster in South Korea, tend to have a greater impact on children [13].

The global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that has occurred in the last three years has been a catastrophic event affecting the world and causing significant harm to everyone, particularly children and adolescents [14]. A study in this special edition discusses how the pandemic has acted as a form of toxic stress on children in terms of the support provided by caregivers, families, and adults in the household and suggests necessary actions to address this issue [15].

Today, children and teenagers are considered digital natives, who grow up using digital technology from a young age. Online cyberviolence can have a significant negative impact on young individuals, and adults may struggle to notice it and provide support because they may not have experienced it themselves. South Korea is a technologically advanced country with a high smartphone usage rate [16].

Hence, professionals in the field of child and adolescent mental health must be knowledgeable about the various

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types of cyber violence, their characteristics, negative impacts, and strategies to combat them. This study focuses on cyberbullying and digital sexual violence, which are prevalent forms of cyberviolence in South Korea [17].

It is anticipated that this special edition will improve the comprehension of digital trauma and trauma in the real world and encourage scholars globally to focus more on the immediate and lasting impacts of trauma and disasters on children and teenagers, including prevention strategies, early detection, and intervention efforts.

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