The Effect of Parent Group Sandplay Therapy on the Nepal Earthquake Survivors: Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms, Parenting Stress and Psychological Well-Being of Parents as well as Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms in Children

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People who have experienced property damage and loss from the Nepal earthquake in 2015 are living in a temporary tent area. These earthquake survivors experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress and exhibit altered thoughts and behaviors. This study was conducted on parents who reside in the tent city at Chuchepati and who have children aged from 7 to 17. For the group sandplay therapy program, the Impact of Events Scale-Revised, Child Report of Post-traumatic Symptoms, and the Parent Report of Post-traumatic Symptoms were administered. There were 24 individuals who agreed to participate in this study and whose child received 19 or more points from child post-traumatic symptom reports, along with 16 or more points from parent post-traumatic symptom reports, and 33 points from the IES-R. The results of this study indicate that parent group sandplay therapy is effective in reducing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress and parenting stress, and also in enhancing the psychological well-being of parents.

Keywords: group sandplay therapy, earthquake survivors, parent survivors, Nepal earthquake

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Ⅰ. Introduction

1. Purpose of Research

In April 2015, a major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.3 hit Nepal. Together with multiple aftershocks, the earthquake killed 9,000 people and injured 22,000. More than 550,000 homes were destroyed, and as a result tent cities sprang up across the country (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015). Traumatic events like this earthquake result in symptoms of intrusion and avoidance, as well as symptoms of negative cognitive and emotional changes in relation to the traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Direct or indirect experiences of such disasters have a negative impact especially on the physical and emotional development of children, who have difficulty expressing their psychological and emotional stress in a verbal manner (Kang et al., 2014).

Children are a group of dependent beings; their development is largely affected by personal, environmental, social and cultural factors (Kang et al., 2011). The parent-child relationship is very important in child development. It is precisely this relationship that impacts the child's resilience either positively or negatively. Therefore, children who experience anxiety and post-traumatic symptoms after an earthquake require parents to provide nurturing in a stable manner (Correia & Linhares, 2007). The higher the level of psychological wellbeing of a parent, the better he or she can provide stable nurturance for the child. Psychological wellbeing is the parent's level of happiness or satisfaction over life as a whole (Moon & Lee, 2010). Parental stress is related to psychological wellbeing: poor psychological wellbeing leads to high level of parental stress. High levels of parental stress largely determine the quality of parent-child relationships as well as the child's development in terms of their emotions, personality and attitude (Lopata, 1972). So in other words, the parent's psychological wellbeing and parental stress have a great amount of influence over the child's development (Jung & Kim, 2014).

The principal religion of Nepal is Hinduism. The Hindus believe that they should entirely surrender their life to the gods and simply accept and resign themselves to what happens in life (Shariff, 2009). The religion suppresses all forms of negative emotional expression. This means that the people of Nepal have not been free to express the psychological difficulties they experienced after the earthquake. Furthermore, the family culture in Nepal emphasizes submission