

## **ABSTRACT**

Disaster mental health, particularly postdisaster child mental health, is neglected in India. This study compares the impact of a natural disaster versus a spate of communal riots that occurred in Gujarat, India on January 26, 2001, and February 2002 to June 2002, respectively. Children aged 8-15 years from highly exposed earthquake sites (n = 128) and riot sites (n = 171) were approached for participation. A matching control sample of 351 nontrauma-exposed children was sought to compare with the trauma groups. Trauma and postdisaster adversities were studied using the UCLA disaster trauma tool; Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used to assess adjustment difficulties. Spearman's correlations were calculated to find associations between trauma items on UCLA's brief trauma scale and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire items. Results suggest that 7.6% of the earthquake sample and 38.7% from the riots sample manifested clinically significant mental health problems. The earthquake sample had 24.8% of those above clinical cutoff for probable posttraumatic stress disorder and the riots sample had 27.3% children who displayed posttraumatic stress symptoms. Children exposed to violence were psychologically more affected and in the presence of postdisaster adversities, posttraumatic stress symptoms persisted long term. This finding should enable development of differential psychotherapeutic interventions for children exposed to extreme events.