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Situational Social Support Groups for Information Sharing in Times of Disaster: A Case of 2014 Floods in Malaysia

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Abstract

The 2014 floods in Malaysia is considered the worst so far in the country's history of floods: millions of people were affected, many were evacuated, lives were lost, properties damaged, and facilities and utilities became unusable during this ordeal. The objectives of the study are: (1) to determine the information behavior of the flood victims, (2) to classify the types of social support groups formed during the floods, (3) to determine the characteristics of flood victims who faced losses and received gains from the floods, and (4) to develop a typology for the types of social support groups for various outcomes of the floods. A total of 507 respondents were gathered for the study using a cross-sectional survey method. Three types of social support groups were formed during the floods: volunteer, kinship, and the public. The victims shared information on losses with the volunteer group the most, followed by kinship and the public. However, spiritual gains were shared the most with the victims' kin.. Married respondents, with secondary education and those involved in agricultural work gained the most aid from various agencies.

Keywords: *Flood victims; information sharing; loss and gain; Malaysia; social support groups.*

INTRODUCTION

Social support groups are comforting and useful in times of sadness and joy. The group helps reduce the burden and suffering of the victims while in good times, such a group can elevate the achievers' happiness. Thus, the social group is significant, regardless of sadness or joy. This study tries to explore the potential of social support groups especially during the devastating 2014 floods in Malaysia. Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, Farley (1988) identify three types of social support groups: significant others, family and friends in managing depression and anxiety among students. Shumaker and Brownell (1984) characterize social support as "an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient (p. 13).

The worst floods in Malaysia witnessed the episodic evacuation of more than 100,000 victims from their homes to temporary safety evacuation centers (Reuters, 2014). In such an unexpected mishap, the government was not fully prepared for providing immediate help and rescue aid in such a large scale. The rescue teams were rather slow in their responses although they did try their best to render help to the victims. Al-Jazeera (2014), however, kept the world updated on the development of the floods.

In one particular case of a calamity, Masud-All-Kamal (2013) discusses the role of local government, society, organizations and communities in assisting the recovery from a cyclone in Bangladesh. Malaysia, however, rarely experiences cyclones and typhoons unlike neighboring countries like the Philippines and Thailand. Nonetheless, Malaysia often faces natural disasters in the form of floods resulting from the Monsoon seasons that rage from November until March annually. Therefore, this study explores the possibility of using the social support groups that emerged from a disaster for the sharing of information. As such, it tries to determine how the social support groups share information during and after the disaster to spread the news, both bad and good with the people, via kinship, volunteers, or the public. The objectives of the study are: (1) to determine the information behavior of the flood victims, (2) to classify the types of social support groups formed during the floods, (3) to determine the characteristics of flood victims who face losses and receive gains from the floods, and (4) to develop a typology for the types of social support groups for various outcomes of the floods.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *The Social Support Theory*

Shumaker and Brownell's (1984) theory on Social Support defines social support as "an exchange of resources between two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient". This research incorporates all types of social support since damages to the flood victims were compensated by all the above social support groups comprising three categories namely: (1) volunteers, (2) kinship, and (3) public.

Most often, social support is referred to as "social interactions that provide individuals with actual assistance and embedded them into a web of social relationships perceived to be loving, caring and readily available in times of need" (Barerra, 1986; Hobfoll and Stokes, 1988 in Kaniasty and Norris, 2004). Based on this definition, Kaniasty and Norris (2004) sum up

three characteristics of social support: (1) *received social support* (actual receipt of help); (2) *social embeddedness* (quality and type of relationships with others); and (3) *perceived support* (the belief that help would be available if needed).

They also argue that these characteristics can be seen in two different processes that emerged after the disasters. First is the *mobilization of social support* which happens immediately after the impact where “communities of victims, professional supporters and emphatic witnesses rally to rescue, protect, and help each other” (Kaniasty and Norris, 2004: 201). This first process is in the category of received support. Then, in the next process, victims soon start to realize that their needs for assistance far exceed the availability of resources. They slowly feel the harsh reality and start to grieve over their losses and damages. Kaniasty and Norris name this behavior as *deterioration of social support* which occurs in the fields of *perceived support* and *social embeddedness*.

Many have agreed that “threats and losses elicit strong and rapid physiological, emotional, and social responses” (Selye, 1983). And many of the disaster literatures indicate that initial search and rescue activity, casualty care and restoration of services are accomplished by the victims themselves (Wenger, James and Faupel, 1985). The initial social support was derived from the victims themselves. Initially, any news of the affected or risk areas may not have been easily or fully reported because at that time the Internet was not yet available to all. People were not as connected as they are today. The advancement of technologies, especially the Internet, has brought us together and has made information sharing at our fingertips.

Nothing is better than the immediate post-disaster mobilization of help and support because people expect instant help in times of crisis and any previous conflicts among people or community, race, ethnic and social class barriers appear to be dissolved temporarily (see Drabel, 1986; Bolin, 1989; Eranen and Liebkind, 1993 in Kaniasty and Norris, 2004). Although there is a lot of formalized aid offered by governmental and relief agencies, Barton (1969) in her study on communities in disaster argues that victims tend to rely primarily on their indigenous support networks such as family, friends, neighbors, and local religious congregations. These networks are not distributed equally or randomly because of the rule of relative needs (Kaniasty and Norris, 1995) which dictates that priority be given to those victims who experience the worst of such disasters. However, in addition to this, certain people have a relative advantage or disadvantage in receiving post-disaster aid and support. In this context, the pre-existing socio-political and cultural structures such as race, age and economic status are the key factors affecting the distribution of resources in recovery (Kaniasty and Norris, 2004).

Social support has been widely applied not only in disaster cases, but also in medical cases such as coronary heart disease in Malaysia (Sharmini, 2007), chronic pain patients in Malaysia (Mohamad Avicenna, 2007), and breast cancer survivors in Saudi Arabia (Nour Ahmad Kikkhia (2014). For example, Sharmini (2007) finds that social support reduces depression among the coronary heart disease patients while Nour does not find the mediating effect of social support on the relationship between spirituality and health-related quality of life.

In the context of this study, the flood victims were in desperate need of support from their family members and friends, not to forget the state and the federal governments. The support required was not only for material resources but also, and more importantly, the social and

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spiritual support from close family members and friends, who are supposed to care for them in such a situation.

Social Support Groups for Information Sharing

According to Glanz, Rimer and Viswanath (2008), there are four types of social support behaviours: (1) emotional where exchanges of expressions of empathy, love, trust and caring happen; (2) instrumental where tangible aid and services are provided to victims; (3) informational where advice, suggestions, and information are provided and shared accordingly; and (4) appraisal where information that is useful for self-evaluation is provided. Therefore, there are costs incurred and/or benefits for such supportive exchanges gained through such a process.

It is also difficult for social support to last the full length of the recovery period. This is because resource loss is difficult to prevent and more powerful than resource gain. In other words, the resource or support that victims gain may not be sufficient to replace whatever they have lost in the disaster. Kiniasty et al. (1999) also argue that there are a number of forces that cause support deterioration. First is that the disaster disrupts social networks. Many of the supporters from the victims' networks are dead, injured and/or relocated. Most of the victims, when they return to their homes, find that their neighbors and friends have moved away and some never come back. This changes the structure of the community forever.

Second, the victims' expectations for support may clash with the post-disaster reality. The victims should lower their expectations for perceived support in the aftermath of natural disasters or they may get disappointed. A third factor is that disasters interfere with social activities and resulting companionship. Most of the physical environments, settings and places would be affected or damaged. Routine activities such as visiting, shopping, recreation would no longer be relevant.

Therefore, the recovery may also be a very lonely and isolating process. Victims will have to find their strengths and energies to gain control of their lives.

Information Sharing of Losses and Gains

Natural disasters and crises are marked by a combination of information overload and information dearth. During these emergencies, people are concerned with massive incoming information. Even when warnings and risk information are disseminated through the traditional mass media and official sources, people will turn towards seeking information using social connections and resources at hand, often turning to their communities for support (Shklovski, Palen & Sutton, 2008).

In this study, the massive floods of 2014 in Malaysia were unforeseen. The government was not prepared even though Malaysia had been facing the monsoon season every year. The loss of long accumulated goods and belongings within such a short span of time had caused trauma and disappointment among flood victims. As such, there arose the need to share such mishaps with those who are willing to listen and to care for them. The perceived loss is lessened when the experiences of destruction and damage are shared. The social support groups, especially friends,

family members and relatives are significant in lessening the worry and distress resulting from the floods.

The government of Malaysia, aware of the devastation to persons and property in the 2014 floods, gave both material aid and social support to these victims to lessen their suffering and depression. However, material support is nothing compared to the loss of belongings especially those that have been accumulated for years. The government, however, was only able to supply the basic needs per household. Hence, the gain is less, yet still meaningful. The only gains cherished by the victims, especially the Malays and Muslims were their inner strength and their amplified spirituality. They are stronger now as a result of the mishap.

METHODOLOGY

The study applies the quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey as the research method. A questionnaire was developed to collect data from the families affected by the 2014 floods in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang in the East-Coast of Malaysia. The data collection was conducted by trained enumerators for three months from March to May 2015. The sample was selected based on a stratified random sampling procedure where flood victims in the states of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan were surveyed. The enumerators from the respective states then visited the flood victims from the affected villages in the three states to collect data from them. A total of 507 families, represented by a family member, answered the survey questionnaire.

Measures and Reliability of the Study

The **interpersonal communication** as the source of information is a single item scale measured using a 5-point Likert-like scale where 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, and 5=always. **People involved** in the sharing of information about floods is measured using a 5-point Likert-like scale where 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, and 5=always. They include 14 items comprising family members, friends, media personnel and the public among others. The items are analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and three social support groups namely: F1=volunteer, F2=kinship and F3=public. **Frequency of contact** with friends/family members/relatives during the flood is made up of 5 items, measured on a 5-point Likert-like scale, where 1=never, 2=once in a month, 3=forth-nightly, 4=weekly, and 5=daily. An example of the frequency of contact items is that: "I get more information from my friends/family members/relatives about the flood". **Kind of information shared** comprises 10 items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly agree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. An example of the kind of information shared item is that: "I share information related to floods in the most affected areas". Perceived flood aftermath is measured by two constructs: losses resulting from the 2014 floods and **gains** obtained from the 2014 floods. Extent of perceived losses consist of 15 items measured using a 5-point Likert-like scale, where 1=not very much, 2=not much, 3=a little, 4=much, and 5=very much. The losses are classified into two factors: F1=Household goods and F2=External belongings. The gains are classified into two factors, namely, F1=material gains and F2=spiritual gains. All the items, within each construct, are subjected to reliability test and all constructs are reliable: kind of information shared ($\alpha=.921$); people involved ($\alpha=.873$) with three factors, namely, F1: encompassing volunteer ($\alpha=.858$), F2=kinship ($\alpha=.821$), and F3=public ($\alpha=.566$);

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perceived losses ($\alpha=.951$) encompasses two factors: F1=household goods ($\alpha=.941$), and F2=external belongings ($\alpha=.916$); and perceived gains obtained ($\alpha=.923$) encompassing two factors: F1=material gains ($\alpha=.938$) and spiritual gains ($\alpha=.886$). All the constructs are reliable, that is, having Cronbach's alpha greater than .70 except for the F3 in the social support group. However, the public is a distinct group from the other two groups that emerged. Therefore, no item is deleted from the study.

The analysis is done on a summated scale for each construct for their relationships. The net benefit is computed based on perceived gain obtained minus perceived loss incurred after the floods. If the outcome is minus, then it is considered a loss. However, if the outcome is positive, it is considered a gain. These outcomes are cross-tabulated by the selected demographic characteristics of the respondents. The overall percentage is obtained based on the mean, multiplied by 100 divided by 5, the scale used for the study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Characteristics of the Study

Out of a total of 507 respondents, 63.1% are females. More than half of the respondents are married (55.8%), with 39.4% still single while the rest (4.8%) are divorced/widowed. The mean age is 35.9 years old, ranging from 14 to 76 years old. Their education levels are varied, mainly with secondary education (34.7%), college and diploma holders (24.4%), and with degree (32.9%). The rest of the respondents (8.0%) have primary education with no formal education. More than half have a low income of RM2000 and less (57.3%), 30.3% are in the middle income bracket (RM2001-RM4000), while the rest (12.4%) receive an income of more than RM4001 as their gross individual monthly income. Even, their family gross income per month is still low, with 46.1% earning an income of RM2000 and below, 28.4% with an income of between RM2001-RM4000 while the rest (25.5%) are getting an income of RM4001 and above. Six in ten of the respondents (60.8%) work while the rest (38.2%) do not. Out of 307 respondents who work, more than half of the number of respondents (55.4%) work on a permanent basis, 27.4% are self-employed while the rest (17.2%) work on a contract or temporary basis. Majority of them (88.1%) work full-time while the rest (11.9%) work on a part-time basis. The distribution of their job category varies, from professional (23.5%), administration and management (19.8%), clerical (10.2%), sales and services (25.9%), agriculture (10.6%), and in the production and manufacturing line (9.9%).

More than three-quarters of the number of respondents (78.0%) own their own property, with 19.8% renting while the rest (2.2%) are staying in government quarters. Many (42.2%) live in a village type of house, 30.8% are living in terraced houses, and 21.0% live in bungalow/detached houses). Most of them (78.2%) are staying as a basic family (parents and their children) and many are having an extended family (16.6%). The mean length of years staying at their present house is 15.7 years ($SD=12.0$) with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 58 years. The mean number of staying-in family members is 6 residents ($SD=2.7$). The above characteristics reflect a typical Malay family in the East Coast of Malaysia.

Information Sharing Behavior

The respondents were also asked about the frequency of contact with their friends/family members/relatives during the floods (Table 1). Results show that the respondents received more information ($M=4.203$, $SD=0.986$), shared ($M=4.164$, $SD=0.985$) and gave information ($M=4.026$, $SD=1.053$) to their friends/family members/relatives, daily. They voluntarily contacted ($M=4.164$, $SD=0.985$) and were even asked to contact friends/family members/relatives which they did weekly. Therefore, the process of information sharing on a varying degree, that is, asymmetrically (giving more or getting more) or symmetrically (sharing with equal giving and getting) is done more frequently out of necessity.

Table 1 Level of usage of interpersonal communication

Level of Usage of Interpersonal Communication	Frequency	Percentage
Never	39	7.7
Rarely	50	9.9
Sometimes	81	16.0
Often	155	30.6
Always	181	35.8
Total	506	100.0
Mean=3.769, SD=1.247, %=75.4		

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (80.2%) shared information related to floods in general ($M=4.008$, $SD=1.006$). They also shared information on the most affected areas ($M=3.941$, $SD=1.037$), on victims ($M=3.804$, $SD=1.064$), rescue efforts ($M=3.484$, $SD=1.333$), government efforts ($M=3.383$, $SD=1.180$), and the number of victims affected. ($M=3.347$, $SD=1.180$).

Table 2 Frequency of contacts with friends/family members/relatives

No.	Information Sharing	*Mean	SD	%
1	I get more information from my friends/family members/relatives about the flood.	4.203	0.986	84.1
2	My friends/family members/relatives and I share information equally about the flood.	4.164	0.985	83.3
3	I give more information to my friends/family members/relatives about the flood.	4.026	1.053	80.5
4	I voluntarily contact my friends/family members/relatives about the flood.	3.921	1.129	78.4
5	I was asked to contact my friends/family members/relatives about the flood.	3.621	1.276	72.4
Overall information sharing ($\alpha=.904$)		3.987	0.927	79.7

*1=never (1-20%), 2=once in a month (21-40%), 3=fortnightly (41-60%), 4=weekly (61-80%), and 5=daily (81-100%).

Types of Social Support Groups Formed during the Floods

There are three social support groups that emerge from the factor analysis. They are classified as group 1: volunteers; Group 2: kinship; and Group 3: public (Table 3). Specifically, the volunteers comprise co-workers, students, rescue personnel, government agency representatives, NGO representatives, alumni/ex-students and the media personnel; while the kinship group comprised family members, friends, relatives, neighbours, and the victims' families. The public included the general public and heads of village/province. On the whole, the kinship group ($M=4.017$, $SD=0.794$) is the most highly connected group, followed by the public ($M=3.054$, $SD=1.127$) and lastly, the volunteer group ($M=2.236$, $SD=1.164$). This is because kinship is the closely connected group and in most cases, they are situated in proximity and around the vicinity and thus often have family ties.

Table 3 Kinds of information shared with friends/family members/relatives

No.	Flood Information Shared	*Mean	SD	%
1	I shared information related to floods in general.	4.008	1.006	80.2
2	I shared information about the most affected areas.	3.941	1.037	78.8
3	I shared information about the victims.	3.804	1.064	76.1
4	I shared information about rescue efforts.	3.484	1.133	69.7
5	I shared information about government efforts.	3.383	1.186	67.7
6	I shared information about the number of victims.	3.347	1.180	66.9
Overall flood information shared ($\alpha=.931$)		3.661	0.933	73.2

*1=strongly disagree (1-20%), 2=disagree (21-40%), 3=slightly agree (41-60%), 4=agree (61-80%), and 5=strongly agree (81-100%).

Comparisons are made with regard to the degree of relationship among various social support groups (Table 4). Kinship is the most referred group for frequency of information sharing ($r=.522$, $p=.000$) and for various kinds of information shared ($r=.507$, $p=.000$), followed by the public group while the least is the volunteer group. However, when it comes to loss of household goods ($r=.729$, $p=.000$) and external belongings ($r=1.000$, $p=.000$), the volunteer group is the one that gets the most information from the victims. Household goods that are lost include house, furniture, kitchen utensils, television and electrical products, among others, while external belongings include crops, livestock, business premises to name a few. This is because the victims want to let other people know how much they have lost resulting from the floods. This will get them nationwide sympathy and attention, especially with all the media coverage.

The floods not only bring losses but also some material and spiritual gains. The material gains include a new house, refrigerator, stove, television, pillows and mattress, and money, to name a few while the spiritual gains include broader knowledge, improved spirituality and improved interpersonal relationships and family ties. All these enhance their inner strengths, courage and motivation to accept the mishaps. In terms of material gains, the flood victims willingly shared this information with the volunteer groups ($r=.637$, $p=.000$), the public ($r=.138$, $p=.001$) and the kinship group ($r=.114$, $p=.005$). The victims' willingness to share this with the volunteer

group stems from the aid that they received from the government, other organizations and philanthropists alike. Spiritual gain was mainly shared with kinship ($r=.254$, $p=.000$), with the volunteers ($r=.174$, $p=.000$) and the public groups ($r=.174$, $p=.000$).

In the end, the outcome of loss and gain which is called benefits, can be either positive or negative, depending on the degree of the net gain/loss. Results show there is no specific group that appears to be the most referred to at all. The volunteer group is significantly not being reported to at all ($r=-.499$, $p=.000$); neither the kinship nor the public. Probably, this is best kept among the victims themselves. The Malaysian government has made efforts to help flood victims to survive, not only through material aid but also through emotional support.

Table 4 Types of Social support groups formed during the floods

Types of Social Support Groups	Individual	Mean	SD	%
Volunteer	Co-workers	3.008	1.329	60.2
	Students	2.823	1.317	56.5
	Rescue personnel	2.582	1.286	51.6
	Government agency representatives	2.207	1.233	44.1
	NGOs representatives	2.192	1.243	43.8
	Alumni/ex-students	2.101	1.251	42.0
	Media personnel	2.034	1.156	40.7
	Overall volunteer	2.236	1.164	44.7
Kinship	Family members	4.452	0.953	89.0
	Friends	4.217	0.943	84.3
	Relatives	4.185	0.939	83.7
	Neighbors	3.675	1.154	73.5
	Victim families	3.557	1.179	71.1
	Overall kinship	4.017	0.794	80.3
Public	General public	3.235	1.286	64.7
	Head of village /province	2.874	1.410	57.5
	Overall public	3.054	1.127	61.1

The Overall Losses and Gains from the Floods

Table 5 presents a cross-tabulation between the losses and gains after the floods. On the whole, there are more material losses than gains, that is, house ($\chi^2=345.304$, $p=.000$), furniture ($\chi^2=469.642$, $p=.000$), clothes ($\chi^2=159.399$, $p=.000$), kitchen utensils ($\chi^2=282.379$, $p=.000$), books ($\chi^2=282.379$, $p=.000$), documents ($\chi^2=276.435$, $p=.000$), electrical items ($\chi^2=288.387$, $p=.000$), and business premises ($\chi^2=345.304$, $p=.000$). These tangible materials had been accumulated for years but were destroyed within a very short span of time, thus, resulting in more losses than gains. However, in terms of monetary gains there is no significant difference

between gains and losses. This is so because the amount given by the government and the amount of losses incurred is about the same. Probably, the victims did not keep their money at home nor did they have the money in hand during the 2014 floods. Considering the overall net benefit (inclusive of the spiritual gains), the victims acknowledged that the gain is significantly more than the loss ($\chi^2 = 8.677$, $p = .000$). To the Malays in the East Coast villages of Peninsular Malaysia, spiritual gain is especially more precious than material gains. It is thus that the Malays, who are Muslims, are more contented and perceived to be more pious, compared to the Malays in the other parts of Malaysia.

Table 5 Correlation between types of social support groups and the selected variables

Selected Variables	Volunteer	Kinship	Public
Frequency of information sharing	$r = .174$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .522$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .384$ ($p = .000$)
Kind of information shared	$r = .190$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .507$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .361$ ($p = .000$)
Overall losses resulting from floods:	$r = .915$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .101$, ($p = .012$)	$r = .107$ ($p = .008$)
Loss of household goods	$r = .729$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .124$, ($p = .003$)	$r = .093$ ($p = .019$)
Loss of external belonging	$r = 1.000$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .059$, ($p = .093$)	$r = .100$ ($p = .012$)
Overall gains resulting from floods	$r = .610$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .164$, ($p = .000$)	$r = .166$ ($p = .000$)
Material gains	$r = .637$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .114$, ($p = .005$)	$r = .138$ ($p = .001$)
Spiritual gains	$r = .174$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .254$, ($p = .000$)	$r = .174$ ($p = .000$)
Net benefit	$r = -.499$ ($p = .000$)	$r = .057$, ($p = .100$)	$r = .052$ ($p = .119$)

The Overall Loss and Gain from the Floods by Profile of Respondents

Further analysis was carried out to find out the types of victims that are more likely to benefit from the floods. Table 6 reveals that the married respondents ($\chi^2 = 15.135$, $p = .001$) were more likely to gain from contributions made by the government and other charity organizations as part of their community social responsibility. The secondary education victims ($\chi^2 = 12.419$, $p = .029$) were more likely to gain from the charity donated by the respective organizations. Those victims who were involved in the agricultural sector ($\chi^2 = 12.095$, $p = .034$) were more likely to benefit from contributions made by the relevant contributors, more than those from other job categories. For the other categories of victims, there is no significant difference among the groups. Hence, the gains and losses are not obvious.

Table 6 Loss and gain outcomes resulting after floods

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-sq	p
Household Goods					
House (N=506)	Loss	462	91.3	345.304	.000
	Gain	44	8.7		
Furniture (N=505)	Loss	496	97.8	469.642	.000
	Gain	9	1.8		
Clothes (N=506)	Loss	395	78.1	159.399	.000
	Gain	111	21.9		
Kitchen utensils (N=506)	Loss	442	87.4	282.379	.000
	Gain	64	12.6		
Books (N=506)	Loss	442	87.4	282.379	.000
	Gain	64	12.6		
Documents (N=506)	Loss	440	87.0	276.435	.000
	Gain	66	13.0		
Electrical items e.g. TV (N=506)	Loss	444	87.7	288.387	.000
	Gain	62	12.3		
Business premise (N=506)	Loss	462	91.3	345.304	.000
	Gain	44	8.7		
Money (N=506)	Loss	242	47.8	0.957	.328
	Gain	264	52.2		
Overall Net Benefit (N=502)	Loss	218	43.4	8.677	.003
	Gain	284	56.6		

A Typology for the Types of Social Support Groups for Various Outcomes of the Floods

In most case, there are more losses than gains. Table 8 presents the summary of the results. It is found that kinship is widely referred to in the frequency of information sharing, kinds of information shared, spiritual gains and net benefits. Therefore, the study indicates that kinship is used for frequent sharing of various types of information especially that pertaining to the spiritual as well as the gains and the overall benefits from the floods. The volunteer group, on the other hand, is the group the victims confide in when it comes to loss of household goods and external belongings, in addition to material gains. This indicates that observable goods are easy to share with others, especially outsiders. In this case, it is only the volunteer group who comes to visit the victims in their time of need, and they are there to care for the victims. In summary, the study is able to project the possibility of giving help to victims as well as the types of people and groups that are more likely to be involved in the case of a disaster, like the 2014 floods.

Table 7 Overall loss and gain outcomes after the floods by profile of the flood victims

Demographic Characteristics	Category	Loss	Gain	Total	X2	df	p	Cramer's V	p
Gender	Male	71	116	187	3.614	1	.057	.085	.057
	Female	147	168	315					
	Total	218	284	502					
Marital status	Single	104	95	199	15.135	2	.001	.174	.001
	Married	110	169	279					
	Divorced/widowed	4	20	24					
	Total	218	284	502					
Highest level of education	No formal education	3	8	11	12.419	5	.029	.158	.029
	Primary education	9	20	29					
	Secondary education	65	107	172					
	College/STP/ Diploma	51	71	122					
	Degree	83	71	154					
	Master/PhD	6	6	12					
	Total	217	283	500					
Working status	No	131	168	299	0.052	1	.820	.010	.820
	Yes	86	115	201					
	Total	217	283	500					
Types of job	Permanent	71	98	169	1.768	3	.622	.076	.622
	Contract	14	11	25					
	Temporary	12	15	27					
	Self-employed	37	45	82					
	Total	134	169	303					
Job status	Full-time basis	113	150	263	0.89	1	.343	.055	.343
	Part-time basis	18	17	35					
	Total	131	167	298					
Job category	Professional	39	30	69	12.095	5	.034	.205	.034
	Administration and management	28	29	57					
	Clerical	10	20	30					
	Sales and services	33	42	75					
	Agriculture	7	22	29					
	Production and manufacturing	10	19	29					
	Total	127	162	289					
Gross income	RM500 and below	10	19	29	8.257	7	.310	.163	.310
	RM501-RM1000	28	36	64					
	RM1001-RM2000	39	46	85					
	RM2001-RM3000	21	32	53					
	RM3001-RM4000	16	25	41					
	RM4001-RM5000	10	9	19					
	RM5001-RM6000	3	6	9					
	RM6001 and above	8	2	10					
	Total	135	175	310					

Types of house	Bungalow/detached house	38	39	77	1.878	3	.598	.072	.598
	Village/long house	62	90	152					
	Terraced house	48	63	111					
	Others	11	11	22					
	Total	159	203	362					
Type of house ownership	Own	120	164	284	1.071	1	.301	.054	.301
	Rental/government quarters	39	41	80					
	Total	159	205	364					
Type of family	Basic family	127	166	293	0.766	1	.381	.045	.381
	Extended and others	40	42	82					
	Total	167	208	375					

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The flood victims mainly use interpersonal communication as a source of getting information about the floods in their area. They receive, share and give such information daily. The process of contacting their friends, family members and relatives is done of their own accord rather than being asked by others. The kind of information shared pertains to the most affected flood areas and the victims involved. They share less about the rescue, government efforts and the number of victims.

There are three types of social support groups during the floods: volunteer, kinship and the public. The volunteer group comprises the victims' co-workers, students and rescue personnel while kinship includes family members, friends and relatives. On the other hand, the public consists of the general public and heads of village/province. The various social support groups are frequently contacted depending on the frequency of information sharing and the kinds of information shared, whereby the kinship group is more likely to be contacted over the public or the volunteer groups. However, when it comes to sharing information on their losses which is inclusive of their household goods and external belongings, the victims are more open to the volunteer group than either their kinship group or the public. This is probably because they may not want their friends, family members and relatives to know about their losses. They do not want their sympathy as they are probably suffering similar losses themselves. In terms of gains received through aid from the government, charitable organization and philanthropists, the flood victims prefer to share such information with the volunteer groups, especially that pertaining to material gains received. However, in terms of spiritual gains such as broadening their knowledge on floods, improving their interpersonal relationships with family and their spirituality, the flood victims are more than willing to share such gains with their kinship. This could be because information regarding material losses and inner strength can only be shared with those who are close to them. This can heighten their happiness and religiosity. The material losses are significant except for money lost. Probably, they do not keep their money in their homes. Spiritually, the flood victims believe in the net benefit from the floods. The victims who most feel that they have received benefits from the floods are the married ones, those with secondary education and those involved in agriculture. These are the people most affected in terms of losses, and who are compensated accordingly for such losses.

Overall, the social support groups are applicable to various types of flood outcomes in different contextual settings and in varying degrees of losses or gains. Hence, the social support theory is supported by the experience of the flood victims in this study.

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