

CHANGES OVER TIME OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AFFECTED BY VIOLENT CONFLICT IN INDONESIA

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Introduction: Violent conflict in Mollucas, Indonesia which started in 1999 had displaced more than 500.000 of the province's inhabitants and claimed more than 10.000 lives. The conflict was believed to be mainly a religious war between Christian and Moslem. Despite of the dangerous situation in the province, most of the inhabitants did not leave the province. After a short peaceful condition, another episode of conflict started in 2004.

Objective: This paper aims to investigate the difference of psychological distress and the risk factors of psychological distress of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the shorter period after the outbreak of conflict in 2004 and in the longer period.

Methods: Data were gathered from a longitudinal community based study conducted among internally displaced persons in Ambon island for two consecutive years in 2005 and in 2006. The number of IDP participants was 471 in 2005 and 399 in 2006. Data from 390 participants was analyzed.

Results: There was a significant decrease in prevalence of psychological distress between 2005 and 2006, and the mean of psychological distress scores also was significantly lowered. In general the participants indicated improvement in mental health within one year interval of data collection time. Further investigation found different risk factors for psychological distress for shorter and longer period from the outbreak of the violent conflict.

Conclusion: This study explored the mental health of people affected by violent conflict in a more extensive way. Mental health initiatives were crucial in the process of rebuilding communities after devastating conflict.